Margaret of Parma: A Life

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Margaret of Parma: A Life

By

Charlie R. Steen

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCRH:	*Bulletin de la Commission Royale de l'Histoire*. Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique. (Brussels, 1838–1923).
Briefwisseling:	*Briefwisseling tusschen Margaretha van Parma en Charles de Brimeu, Graf van Megen, Stadhouder van Gelderland, 1560–1567*. Werken uitgegeven door Gelore, no. 11. (Arnhem, 1914).
Correspondance:	*Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche, Duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II, 1559–1565*. L.P. Gachard, ed. (3 vols. Brussels, 1867–1881).
Correspondance française:	*Correspondance française de Marguerite d'Autriche, Duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II, 1565–1567*. J.S. Theissen and H.A. Enno van Gelder eds. (3 vols. Utrecht, 1925–1942).

INTRODUCTION

Margaret, the natural daughter of Charles V and the half-sister of Philip II, became the Duchess of Parma and Regent in the Netherlands playing a major part in the turbulent events of the sixteenth century. From the age of eight in 1530 until her death in 1586, her life story significantly influenced the drama and change of this period of history in Italy and the Netherlands. She served both her father and brother in their very different political worlds and their policies set the pace and direction for her life. She gave substance to the goals of both father and son, laboring to fulfill their orders at a great distance and at considerable personal cost. In her role as a daughter, Margaret became an actor on the imperial stage in Italy where Charles V used her to cement relations with the papacy by restoring Medici power in Florence through force and securing it with her marriage at the age of thirteen to Allesandro de' Medici, a truly hateful man but nevertheless the new ruler of the city. Only his assassination saved Margaret from a dreadful life with a depraved man. After his death, Margaret was immediately thrust into Roman affairs as the *prima donna* of the city through her arranged marriage into the Farnese family, headed by the new pope, Paul III, and organized by her father. Once again, Charles V ignored the poor reputation of the family and of Ottavio, Margaret's betrothed. Her years in Rome did provide her with a wealth of political and cultural experience that helped to mold her public character. As a reward for her marriage, Charles V gave Margaret control of the duchy of Abruzzo and made her Duchess of Parma. Margaret had a major role in establishing the rule of the Farnese family in Parma and Piacenza.

In 1556, her life changed completely when Charles V abdicated and made her half-brother Philip II King of Spain and Lord of the Netherlands. Unlike his father, Philip did not care for the Netherlands except as a source of revenue and he wished to subordinate the political, legal, and cultural life of its people to Spanish absolutism, a form of rule through which Philip hoped to subordinate all parts of his empire to his councils and personal commands. As his regent, Philip II chose Margaret whose delight at returning to the Netherlands was short lived due to the harsh political and religious conflict that broke out after 1559. However, her optimism became the foundation of her government. Margaret viewed the regency as an opportunity to govern well and her ambition startled Philip II who,

from the beginning, cast her in the role of a cipher, a front for government by councils and Spanish agents. Philip II did not consider that Margaret wished to build upon the precedents of the active regents Margaret of Austria, Charles V's aunt who served until 1530, and Mary of Hungary, his sister who served until 1555. Both women were very influential in Margaret of Parma's upbringing and maintained courts with Renaissance characteristics, a blend of astute politics and active cultural involvement. Mary of Hungary's court in Brussels blended firm administrative order, the style of life of the high aristocracy of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and the activities of artists and musicians from Italy, France, and the Netherlands. Margaret thought that her regency would enable here to establish an identical court, but the economic circumstances of the day, the popularity of the Calvinist reform movement, and the political aspirations and personality of Philip II interrupted those plans decisively. The king's indifference to her hopes and ideas combined with a growing dislike for his northern subjects strained relations from the start. Persecution of Calvinism and demands for obedience of his subjects to the agents of Spanish rule characterized Philip II's regime and he showed his determination to compel the Netherlands to submit in religion and political life.

The long history of provincial rights and liberties in the conduct of political and religious life gave the Netherlands a dedication to local privileges and independence that was incompatible with royal plans and desires. Indeed, the estates of the provinces, led by those of Brabant and Flanders, began to voice concerns over taxation and intrusions into their judicial traditions as the king demanded prompt and ferocious punishment for heresy. The estates even dared to demand that Hapsburg policies have some connection to the welfare of the provinces. One of the hallmarks of Margaret's regency was her essential sympathy for the attitude of the provinces as their highly organized and independent institutions confronted a stern authoritarianism rooted in *raison d'État*. Philip II's personality and religious beliefs challenged the Netherlands in ways his father had never done. Establishing Philip as Lord of the Netherlands was difficult from the start and his inheritance became an impossible union as he attempted to compel obedience and to crush the growing popularity of Calvinist reformation in the provinces.

The king wanted Margaret to adhere to his vision of the Netherlands as an obedient body politic without comment, but her own personality came to the fore when political opposition and enthusiasm for the new religion climaxed in 1566. Faced with the outbreak of aggressive Calvinism and resistance to Spanish rule that resulted in armed rebellion, Margaret

thwarted the king's wishes by becoming directly involved in pacifying the land. Ardently opposed to the intolerance of both Spanish absolutism and Calvinist reforming zeal, Margaret pursued a policy of compromise and moderation. That policy, even though it succeeded, was a poor personal choice since it angered all the assertive elements and caused Philip to replace her with the intolerant Duke of Alva. Margaret, with minimal force, had suppressed the uprising and presented Alva with a peaceful land as he marched in at the head of thousands of mercenary soldiers. His persistence in treating the provinces as if there was still a state of rebellion and the imposing of a regime that inflicted terrible punishment horrified Margaret and made her last months in the Netherlands a grim ordeal. While she remained in the provinces she was friendless, but once she left Margaret was sorely missed. Indeed, her position of compromise and negotiation had represented the only hope to avert civil war and the division of the provinces after years of slaughter and destruction.

Thus Margaret's is a life worthy of attention because she was more than just a pawn for the Hapsburg males; rather she actually helped to craft policy in each of the political environments she encountered and also had an impact on the cultural life of her time. Her talent and adaptability gave her exceptional status first in Rome and then in the Netherlands where her unrewarding regency actually earned her the respect of the provincial leaders who recognized the value of her moderate ideas the moment she was replaced by the Duke of Alva. In every location that the machinations of her male relatives placed her, she left a positive memory, for she had an honest and concerned political presence. Charles V moved her around Italy at will, but she managed to become a remarkable presence in Rome and Parma before she went to the Netherlands. Thwarted by Philip II as she tried to bring moderation and order to the Netherlands, she never surrendered to the interference and continued to resist what she regarded as unwise policy. Following her dismissal, she returned to Italy and earned high praise for the manner in which she governed the province of Abruzzo until her death in 1586.

Margaret's life took occurred during a period of profound changes in Italy and the Netherlands. Capable and ambitious, she sought to make the most of her positions, but unexpectedly became the victim of forces and personalities that brought ruin to her efforts and to the provinces. Some of the issues that confounded her efforts continued to be divisive long after her return to Italy. The character of Spanish rule, the role of the Calvinists, the insistence on freedom of religious expression, and the merits of provincial privileges were the foundations of eighty years

of strife. Margaret's presence as an advocate for moderation and finding a middle way was valuable in her own time and has currency even in modernity. Consequently Margaret of Parma has attracted the attention of several biographers, led by Felix Rachfahls in the nineteenth century and Jane de Iongh in 1967, besides a number of popular biographies in recent decades. Each of the works has a different perspective and concentrates on different periods, and it is the intention of this work to synthesize some of that material while also directing more attention to the role of Margaret as regent in the midst of troubled and fiercely independent provinces. This feature places her career more fully in the context of the other female rulers of the sixteenth century. She met Catherine de'Medici when she was a girl and was also exposed to the influence of major female figures of political stature in Italy during her long residence in Rome. Like Catherine, Margaret faced the horrors of religious strife in the midst of equally threatening political divisions. On her initial return to the Netherlands Philip II took her to England where she met Mary I. Later Margaret was kept informed of the activities of Elizabeth I and of Mary Queen of Scots through the diplomatic network of which she was a part. Each of the women she encountered either directly or through political relations influenced her to some degree, but she developed her own unique style of rule, blending the moderate and tolerant tendencies of Italy and the Netherlands in the formation of her public persona.

This work has had the help and encouragement of many people, but particularly of my wife Alexandra, the late Andrew Lossky of U.C.L.A., and Professor Emeritus Orest Ranum of The Johns Hopkins University.

Major Figures

Members of the Order of the Golden Fleece, the most important of the Netherland's aristocracy, active in government during the regency of Margaret of Parma.

Leaders of the Order

Orange, William, Prince of (1533–1584). His titles and lands made him an independent force and a center of power outside the court of Brussels in which he held important positions, sitting on the Council of State and serving as the stadtholder of Holland. The prestige of Orange made him vital to the success of Margaret's efforts to govern and his leadership of the opposition to Spanish policies eroded her power. Orange served as

head of the revolt against Spain after 1568 and was assassinated on orders from Philip II in 1584.

Egmont, Lamoral, Prince of Gavres and Count of (1522–1568). Wealthy, powerful, and dedicated to the service of the crown and of the Netherlands under Charles V and during the early years of Philip II's reign, Egmont was disappointed when power did come to him in Margaret's regency. However, he served as stadtholder of Flanders and Artois. His lack of enthusiasm for the persecution of heresy in those provinces and his opposition to Cardinal Granvelle cost him the goodwill of Philip II. He was arrested and executed by the Duke of Alva as retribution in 1568.

Hoorn, Philippe de Montmorency, Count of (1518–1568). The head of an important family with large holdings and wealth, he served as stadtholder of Guelderland and as a member of the Council of State. Margaret depended on him for advice and appointed him to travel to Spain to explain the increasingly dire situation of the provinces in 1565. Philip II pretended to agree with him and sent him home with false assurances of change, assuring his humiliation at the Brussels court. Hoorn was arrested and executed along with Egmont by Alva in 1568.

Members of the Order Active in Provincial Government

Aerschot, Philippe de Croy, Duke of (1521–1595). The stadtholder of Flanders and member of the Council of State, Aerschot never opposed the Spanish regime and was an ardent Catholic who favored persecution of heresy. He was well regarded by Philip II.

Aremberg, Jean de Ligne, Count of (1525–1568). Stadtholder of Frisia, Overijssel, and Groningen, Aremberg was a moderate who helped to maintain order without persecution in the northern provinces. He assisted Margaret in the Council of State.

Berghes, Jean de Glymes, Marquis of (1528–1567). A major figure who served as stadtholder of Brabant, his opposition to the Spanish regime and his refusal to become an ardent supporter of persecution led to his death at court in Madrid while under arrest.

Berlaymont, Charles, Count of (1510–1578). A member of the Council of State and counselor to Margaret of Parma, he was a steady advocate of Spanish policy.

Brederode, Henri, Baron of (1531–1568). A convert to Calvinism, he was the leader of the opposition to the Spanish regime and a founder of the Confederate nobility. He organized the gathering at Brussels to present their petition to Margaret and thereafter was the practical head of the Confederates.

Hoogstraten, Antoine de Lalaing, Count of (1535–1568). He assisted the Prince of Orange in his duties, particularly in the pacification of Antwerp and was regarded with suspicion by Margaret. He withdrew with Orange on the arrival of Alva.

Mansfeld, Peter Ernest, Count of (1517–1604). A moderate voice and cautious advisor of Margaret. He consistently supported Philip II, but avoided the extremism associated with many of the court's policies.

Megen, Charles de Brimeu, Count of (1524–1572). Megen served Margaret well in the field, directing efforts to achieve order and then, after the outburst of iconoclasm in 1566, pacification in the northern provinces. An outspoken critic of her governing methods, Megen remained fiercely loyal to the Spanish regime and was charged with assisting the occupation by the Duke of Alva.

Montigny, Floris de Montmorency, Lord of (1528–1567). The younger brother of Count Hoorn and the Governor of the Tournaisis, Montigny was a vital member of Margaret's government. While he would often follow his own inclinations, he assisted in maintaining order during a period of turbulence in Tournai and he tried to deal with Calvinism in practical terms. Margaret dispatched him to Madrid along with the Marquis of Berghes to explain the disorders to Philip II, but the king regarded the two as part of the problem and had them arrested. Montigny was strangled to death while under arrest.

Noircarmes, Philippe de Saint-Aldegonde, Baron of (?–1577) A minor member of the aristocracy until the Calvinist insurrection of 1566. His military victories in Tournai and Valenciennes thrust him into major positions during Margaret of Parma's pacification efforts and earned him a permanent place in Alva's regime.

Members of the Government Tied to Philip II

Granvelle, Antoine Perrenot de, Cardinal (1517–1586) The son of a member of Charles V's council who was active in Margaret's affairs from the time of her marriage to Alessandro de'Medici. Philip chose him to head the all-important Privy Council in Brussels and he immediately became the center for opposition to Spanish policies. Granvelle attracted more unfavorable attention by profiting enormously from the ecclesiastical reorganization of the Netherlands. Opposition to him paralyzed the government of Margaret of Parma and Philip had to remove him in 1564. Margaret resumed contact with him after her return to Italy.

Viglius van Ayatta (1507–1577). A scholar, jurist, and cleric, Viglius was appointed to the Privy Council by Philip II and supported Granvelle and

Spanish policy. He was a sharp critic of opposition from the provinces and the aristocracy and was the strongest voice in favor of absolutism as a foundation for rule.

Armenteros, Tomas de (1510–1568). A servant of the Spanish crown whose brother was a confidential secretary to Philip II. The Spanish court appointed him to be Margaret's secretary, but he initially associated with the entourage of Cardinal Granvelle and left with him in 1564. He later returned to Brussels and joined Margaret's group of personal advisors.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EMPEROR'S DAUGHTER: A POLITICAL OFFERING

1. *A Child of the Netherlands*

The girl born to Jeanne van der Gheynst in July 1522 seemed unlikely to become a significant figure in sixteenth-century public affairs. Her mother was unwed and, as the daughter of a tapestry worker, had no hope of marrying the father of her child, Charles V, Lord of the Netherlands, King of Spain, and Holy Roman Emperor. Charles had benefitted from a fabulous inheritance that bestowed so many titles on him that he envisioned the possibility of himself as the future monarch of Europe and leader of Christendom. He had a firm view of his exalted place and the mother of his natural child had no place in his future. Charles had his dalliance with Jeanne van der Gheynst at the Chateau de Bourgogne, where she was a servant in the household of Charles de Lalaing, governor of the city of Oudenarde. The visit was to prepare for war with France and to capture the tiny province of the Tournaisis, but his stay was long and the young ruler passed the time with her. Such an affair was meant for his pleasure, and her pregnancy did not change his attitude toward her.[1] The fate of the child, however, was not a foregone conclusion.

At that early point in his reign, Charles prized the advice of Margaret of Austria, his aunt and regent in the Netherlands, who was determined to advance the Hapsburg dynasty, and of his chancellor Mercurino Gattinara, also a staunch advocate of increasing imperial and royal power and of expanding his influence in Italy.[2] The family was guided by vast ambition and personal feelings could never challenge the obligations that each member had to advance the Hapsburgs. His aunt believed that the child of an emperor, even an illegitimate one, had great political value, for minor

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[1] J. Iongh, *Madama, Margaretha van Oostenrijk, Hertogen van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 18–26; G. Dumont, *Marguerite de Parme: Bâtarde de Charles-Quint* (Brussels: 1999), 7–12.

[2] John Headley, *The Emperor and His Chancellor. A Study of the Imperial Chancellery under Gattinara.* (Cambridge: 1983), 114–139. Mercurino Arborio di Gattinara (1465–1530) was a Piedmontese in the service of the Burgundian court at Brussels before Charles drew him into imperial service as chancellor in 1518. He helped to manage the new Italian policy from its beginning.

houses were always eager to marry into great dynasties without reservations, and happy in-laws made enduring allies. Gattinara's advice blended with Margaret's because he wanted Charles to seek dynastic relationships among the independent Italian princes. Thus an imperial child fitted nicely into the plans of both his close advisors, and Charles accepted the baby as his own even before her birth. Paternal affection played no role in his decision; his daughter was merely a pawn in the complicated game of dynastic chess that he wished to play by sealing treaties of alliance with marriages into his own family, a devious and cold-hearted affair.[3] The goal was Hapsburg dominance and every member of the family had assigned tasks.[4]

When Charles left for Spain in May 1522, the pregnant Jeanne remained with her family in the village of Pamele, near the Chateau de Bourgogne. In July, while Charles was in Spain experiencing the pleasures and difficulties of kingship, Jeanne gave birth to his daughter who was immediately christened Margaret in the parish church and then whisked away by Andre de Douvrin, a trusted servant of Charles's brother Ferdinand.[5] Charles granted Jeanne van der Gheynst a small annual pension while he tried to arrange a suitable marriage for her. He wanted to establish a new life for Jeanne that would never include Margaret. He provided a good dowry, and after two years she was married to Jehan van der Dijcke, Lord of Santvliet, and moved into the ranks of the aristocracy. The couple had children, but her first child knew nothing of them as she grew up.

Charles V established the character of Margaret's life, but at a distance. While he had decided to include his natural daughter in his affairs, his dedication to the needs of his far-flung lands required constant traveling and he never saw her until she was eight years old and already engaged to a member of the Medici family.[6] Margaret was raised in the household of Andre de Douvrin in Brussels, but she was wholly under the control of her great aunt, Margaret of Austria who preferred to hold her court in nearby Malines. The regent was a true patron of the arts and her renaissance court combined humanism and rule. While the social environment was unfriendly for Margaret, Malines offered a stable, if cold, background for

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[3] S.A. van Leneppe, *Les années italiennes de Marguerite de Parme*, (Geneva: no date), 9–12; M. Gachard, *Collection des Voyages des Souverains des Pays Bas*, 4 vols. (Brussels: 1874), 2: 31. The opening pages have the *Itinéraire de Charles-Quint de 1506 à 1531.*

[4] H.G. Koenigsberger, *The Habsburgs and Europe* (Ithaca: 1971), 10–14.

[5] Iongh, *Madama*, 9–16.

[6] Jane de Iongh, *Mary of Hungary, Second Regent of the Netherlands* (London: 1958), 146–154; Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 14; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 15–18.

a child. After her fourth birthday, Margaret appeared regularly at court, assuring her a place in the aristocratic social world but one with little prestige due to her illegitimate birth.[7]

On her visits, little Margaret took part in the pageantry of the court along with her three cousins, the son and daughters of the late Isabelle, the former queen of Denmark. Being a Hapsburg assured her personal dignity, but the circumstances of her birth limited her relations with blood relatives. In 1528, the regent made sure that the child had splendid gifts of lace and jewelry for her birthday to highlight her position, but the account books noted that the items were purchased for "the little bastard girl of the Emperor, resident at Brussels."[8] In 1529, Margaret received a beautiful dress of satin and velvet, but it was also for the little bastard. After the death of Margaret of Austria in 1530, Charles's sister, Mary of Hungary, assumed the care of the young Margaret. She lived in Brussels and revived the Coudenberg Palace, making it her political and cultural center. Mary moved the books and painting collections of Margaret of Austria to the Coudenberg and had resident artists, with Bernard van Orly and then Michael Coxcie serving as court painters. In the midst of all those efforts, she also became directly involved in Margaret's life.[9] Mary introduced her to hunting and gave her an appreciation for long, arduous rides and for being outdoors. Throughout these years, the child remained with the de Douvrin household at court and little is known about her activities except that she received a basic education, took lessons of every sort, and left with a good knowledge of court life and a love of the hunt.[10]

Charles kept Margaret in Brussels because of his aunt, but her future was governed by his ambitions in Italy. He had impressive plans to expand his power throughout his vast holdings and recast the administration of his realms and provinces to make them modern, efficient regimes.[11]

Charles also longed for greater influence with the papacy as part of his efforts to combat Lutherans in Germany and to check the advance

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[7] Renato Lefevre, *"Madama" Margarita d'Austria (1522–1586)* (Rome: 1986), 27–28.

[8] Iongh, *Madama*, 14.

[9] Jacqueline Kerkhoff, *Maria van Hongarije en haar hof (1505–1558)* (Hilversum: 2008), 57–70; L.M. Libert, *Dames de Pouvoir, Regentes et gouvernantes des anciens Pays-Bas* (Brussels: 2005), 208–210.

[10] Kerkhoff, *Maria van Hongarije*, 135–142.

[11] James D. Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impressario of War* (Cambridge: 2002), 17–108 and 249–316 for a clear picture of the vast plans of the emperor and the political and financial reality of the time. Gachard, *Collection des Voyages* 2: 51–461 includes the entire text of Jean de Vandanesse's *Journal des Voyages de Charles-Quint* an account of his tireless traveling from place to place in response to the needs of so many different lands.

of France, whose kings were equally hungry for power in Italy and were anxious to hinder the expansion of the Hapsburgs.[12] Margaret became a pawn in part of a vast enterprise Charles undertook in Italy. For both Charles and the papacy, Tuscany was a major issue. The House of Medici sought to strengthen its tenuous hold on Florence and to claim the papacy and thus needed the emperor's intervention, and Charles, for his part, wanted Medici support in his struggle against France. Although he briefly ceased to deal with the ambitious Medici in order to advance his childhood tutor, Adrian of Utrecht, as pope, he never fully abandoned his project. The ascetic Adrian VI was quite out of touch with the way of life at the papal court of the day, and only his early demise prevented serious difficulties within the church. Upon his death, Giulio de' Medici became Pope Clement VII and Charles began to deal with him seriously, entering into a series of negotiations that would decide the fate of Margaret in far off Brussels.[13]

Pope Clement VII was without deep religious character and was noted by his contemporaries as a person whose marvelous intelligence was checked by avarice, dissimulation, and indecisiveness. He remained a powerful political figure as both pope and the head of the House of Medici, but each office carried liabilities in that dangerous time.[14] In 1525, there were negotiations to marry the three-year-old Margaret to Ippolyte de' Medici, the pope's illegitimate son.[15] Those negotiations faltered when the emperor triumphed over Francis I of France at the Battle of Pavia. Charles viewed the victory as an omen, a positive message from God, but the pope feared that it would lead to unchecked imperial power. He thus aligned himself with the French. In contrast, other Italian houses were suddenly eager to be included in negotiations for Margaret's hand and in 1526 she was betrothed to Ercole, the eighteen-year-old heir to Ferrara. If Charles could not gain influence with the papacy, this alliance with the Duke of Ferrara gave him a strategic advantage against France in

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[12] Tracy, *Emperor Charles V*, 24–29; Mia Rodgríguez-Salgado, "Obeying the Ten Commandments: The First War Between Charles V and Francis I, 1520–1529," in Wim Blockmans and Nicolette Mout editors, *The World of Emperor Charles V* (Amsterdam: 2004) 15–67.

[13] Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 32.

[14] T.C.P. Zimmerman, "Guicciardini, Giovio, and the Character of Clement VII," in K. Gouwens, and S. Reiss eds. *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture,* (London: 2005), 19–27.

[15] Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 16–19. See also Marino Sanuto, *Diarii* (Venice, 1879–1903) volumes LV–LVIII for a survey of the affairs and intrigues of Italy at that time.

northeastern Italy. The arrangement, however, ended in 1529 when the Duke of Ferrara also abandoned the Hapsburgs in favor of France.

During the three-year alliance with Ferrara, events in Italy drew the interests of Charles and Clement VII together in a deadly, ironic manner. For years the emperor had maintained a substantial force of German troops in Italy to check any challenge to his claims to Lombardy. Hard times caused him to fall in arrears in paying the soldiers and in 1527, Charles's unpaid army struck out at Rome, sweeping through the city like a savage storm, looting and killing at will. The pope fled to the Castel Sant'Angelo and remained trapped there by the raging soldiers.[16] Almost immediately, republican elements in Florence seized the opportunity to oust the Medici family from the city. These events did not give Charles the upper hand in Italy since the Reformation in Germany demanded his attention, and the French were reestablishing their power and threatening the Netherlands. Charles found himself seeing the advantages of papal friendship and despite his humiliation at the hands of the imperial army, Clement VII needed the emperor to aid him in restoring Medici power. The imperial army withdrew from Rome and Charles gradually resumed negotiations with Clement VII.

2. *The Medici Marriage*

Once again, Margaret was the bait, along with an offer that Charles would return the Medici to power in Florence. When settlement of issues was in sight, representatives met in Barcelona and the centerpiece of the discussion was the marriage of Margaret to the pope's nephew, Alessandro. Also an illegitimate child, Alessandro probably was the result of a union between Guiliano de Medici before he became pope, and a Nubian or Moorish slave, although there was also a chance that his father was Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino.[17] Regardless, Clement VII claimed him as his nephew and designated him ruler of Florence if the marriage was concluded. A major

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[16] Gowens, and Reiss, eds. *The Pontificate of Clement VII*, 75–161; Benvenuto Cellini, *La Vita*, in *Opere di Baldassare Castiglione, Giovanni della Casa e Benvenuto Cellini. La Letteratura Italiana Storia e Teste* (Milan, n.d.) 27: 570–585. Cellini gives a vivid rendition of the brutal assault on Rome, claiming to have assisted the pope in the Castel Sant' Angelo. The imprisonment of the pope had other consequences, for the people Florence restored the republic in 1527.

[17] Christopher Hibbert, *The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall* (New York: 1980), 244–254; Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia di Italia* in *Opere* (Milan: n.d.), 1020.

provision in the agreement called for an imperial army to restore Medici rule to Florence and to punish those who had ousted the family during the sack of Rome. Charles had no qualms about attacking a peaceful city in exchange for gaining a Hapsburg military presence in Tuscany, and the contract was signed in Barcelona on June 23, 1529. Margaret's dowry, aside from the use of an imperial army, included Ravenna and three smaller territories. The contract also contained a joint imperial-papal proclamation legitimizing her birth.[18] In the document, only Charles was mentioned and Jeanne effectively disappeared. Alessandro's birth was ignored.

The agreement in Barcelona tested papal and imperial power in uncertain times. All parties had something to gain and the union certainly served Medici interests. Charles himself went to Italy to be crowned emperor and to have his chancellor Gattinara rewarded with a cardinal's hat. Clement also wanted Charles to affirm the betrothal by moving his daughter to Italy to be raised and educated by the vice regent of Naples until she turned twelve. The pope wanted immediate assistance in reducing the free republican Florentines to obedience, thus thwarting the hopes of men such as Michelangelo who relished continued independence from Medici rule. Clement VII was equally determined to restore his family and increase its power, although he wanted to avoid violence by having the emperor appear personally to call for a return to Medici rule. The dismayed Florentines resisted as best they could, but fierce debate raged within the city as to whether they could defend themselves against the emperor. One vote in 1529 passed a resolution to return to Medici rule despite the dissolute and unpleasant character of Alessandro, but others in the community, including Michelangelo, were determined to resist and vowed to destroy the city themselves rather than lose their freedom. They appealed directly to the emperor, but with no luck; Florence became the emblem of the new imperial strategy for Italy.[19]

During the summer of 1529, the Florentine bishop of Borgo San Sepolero, Leonardo Tornabuoni, arrived at the de Douvrin household to formally greet Margaret in the name of the pope. The bishop came from a family that had a long relationship with the Medici and he lavished attention on Margaret, concluding a ceremonious presentation by kissing the girl's hand. For Margaret this was the first hint of the exacting ceremonies

[18] Lefevre, "*Madama*", 33

[19] Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800* (Chicago: 1973), 1–10.

that would thereafter become her life. Her quiet ways had to be replaced by new worldly manners that required totally different behavior. She was suddenly in a wholly different situation and would thereafter be known as Madama in the diplomatic world. Bishop Tornabuoni left for Rome with her portrait and gave the pope an excessively favorable account of her appearance and life. Charles V's ambassador reported that the pope was overwhelmed with delight. His joy did not cause him to cease negotiations with France to seek closer relations through the union of his niece Catherine de' Medici and Henry, Duke of Orleans and possible heir to the throne.[20]

However, the pope emphasized the importance of the Hapsburg marriage when he personally met with Charles at Bologna in early 1530. Clement VII brought along Alessandro, for whom the emperor reserved special salutations and distinctions. The youth, who already had an unsavory reputation, was not a likely candidate for honors. Meetings between pope and emperor went on for weeks with an impressive display of caution and maneuvering. The pope spoke with passion only about political issues involving papal power and Medici rule in Florence, and on all other subjects he seemed shifty and indecisive. Charles wanted to have the pope coronate him as emperor and legitimize his growing power in Italy. Time was important because of his need to return to Germany in the hopes of suppressing the Lutherans. Thus to hasten a resolution of issues, he placed an army at the disposal of the Medici and, while he and Clement VII talked, it besieged Florence. Consequently, he and Clement did reach a full agreement that affirmed imperial influence in Italy and made Charles the guarantor of Medici rule in Florence. The pope proceeded to the crown of the emperor on 24 February 1530. Both parties received what they wanted, but it was a true triumph for the Medici.[21] The eight year old Margaret was the living symbol and affirmation of imperial favor. Despite his success, the meeting occurred during a sad time for Charles V, as war and heresy dominated Germany and the Netherlands and his closest advisors Gattinara and Margaret of Austria died. Also, at the age of thirty, Charles V was already slowed by manifestations of the illnesses

[20] Leneppe, *Les Années italienne*, 24–25, Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 39–40, Iongh, *Madama*, 34–37.

[21] Hallman, Barbara M., "The Disastrous Pontificate of Clement VII: Disastrous for Giulio de' Medici?" in Gouwens and Reiss eds. *The Pontificate, Of Clement VII*, 29–40. The coronation ceremony was engraved by Nicholas Hogenberg in Joannes Secundus, *Gratae et laboribus aequae posteritati Caesaris sanctique patris longo ordine* (The Hague?: 1532).

that would plague him throughout his life, including asthma, gout, and headaches.[22]

On 10 August 1530, Florence abandoned its resistance to Charles V's troops. The unruly soldiers were under the command of the Prince of Orange, who had also been present when a similar force sacked Rome in 1527. The capitulation of the starved citizens of Florence spared most from death and saved the city from destruction. With Florence once again under Medici rule, Clement VII dispatched Alessandro to join Charles in the Netherlands, hoping that his presence would advance the date of the union with Margaret. While in Rome, Alessandro had earned a reputation for licentiousness, but he abruptly tried to change his ways as he hastened to attend the emperor. In January 1531, Alessandro arrived in Brussels with Charles V and immediately visited his eight-year-old betrothed. A separate meeting brought Charles and Margaret together for the first time. There is no record of the encounter, but, with rare exceptions, Margaret thereafter remained devoted to her father and his interests. Accepting her first task, marriage to Alessandro, must have seemed easy for it was to take place four years later when she was twelve and in the meantime it gave her a new sense of importance. Her guardians presented Margaret carefully, and Alessandro, already twenty, remarked that she was graceful and lovely to see. Margaret's impression of him remained private, but he appeared as a dashing figure in fashionable, splendid clothing and he made her the center of attention. Her youth spared her from realizing that Alessandro had few attractions and that his worst quality was his character. At court he often behaved in a wild, violent manner. Usually he seemed harmless, but at the least provocation he changed from timid to menacing. Flashy garments, jewels, and a courtly demeanor masked an ignoble and fearful character, but such things were not easily detected by a girl during a single visit where he made such a ceremony of honoring her in the presence of her father.[23]

At the end of May 1531 Alessandro left for Florence laden with gifts from Charles V and arrived in the city early in July with his lavish baggage. Here he received an imperial decree from his future father-in-law that restored the Medici to Florence and stated the emperor's personal interest in maintaining the peace of Italy. Since the decree ended their republic,

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[22] Tracy, *Emperor Charles V*, 119–124; Cellini, *La Vita*, 589–592; Gachard, *Voyages*, 2:91–94. Vandanesse details of the elaborate ceremonies that were part of the meeting and coronation. He relates sending the Prince of Orange to besiege Florence without comment.

[23] Sanuto, *I Diari*, LIV, 300; Iongh, *Madama*, 37; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 19.

the citizens of Florence had little to celebrate and welcomed their new ruler in sullen silence. Clement VII wanted to cement the commitment to Medici rule by having Margaret live in Italy. Bishop Tornabuoni had already offered to organize the Italian journey, but Charles thought that it was not quite time to deliver her to an uncertain ally. After the pope and emperor had left Bologna, their pledge of undying friendship gave way to mutual distrust. Clement VII had a changeable, even vicious, nature and had been quite open about seeking his own interests and deviating from the course the two had agreed upon. All of this was promptly reported to Charles, who would then create papal anxiety by hinting that he would arrive at an agreement with the German Protestants unless the pope convened a general council, a step the Vatican wanted to avoid. In response, the pope appeared to draw closer to France and joined in criticism of the treatment to which Charles had subjected Henry Duke of Orleans during his years as a hostage in Madrid. It was no wonder that the emperor watched him warily and used Margaret as a threat to Medici security in Florence, for he could negate the wedding at a moment's notice. However, Charles himself had to be more moderate to keep his own great plans alive, and he offered to alleviate the atmosphere of distrust by organizing another meeting with the pope at Bologna.

The emperor hoped that fond memories would help to restore amicable relations, but the watchful Venetian ambassadors noted that uncertainties and dangers lurked everywhere. Bernardo Navagero and Nicholas Tiepolo remarked that Charles lacked advisors and was hesitant in meetings. Titian's portrait from the time shows an unassertive man, and the ambassadors reported that his caution delayed resolution of major affairs. A separate report questioned why he pledged his daughter to support a pope with whom he never agreed.[24] The emperor showed some of his uncertainty by making a major concession to Clement VII before the meeting took place. He wrote to Mary of Hungary in Brussels and told her to make preparations to send Margaret to Italy to be educated while awaiting her marriage. He thus secured a favorable reception from Clement VII but surrendered part of his control over future events.

Margaret's journey to Italy began in the dead of winter in 1533, sending the ten-year-old south through Germany to Innsbruck and across the Alps

[24] E. Albèri, *Relazioni degli ambasciatori Venete*, Nicholas Tiepolo, report of 1532, series 1, I: 60, and Bernardo Navagero, Report on Charles V, series I, 1: 341–348. Titian met the emperor in Bologna and painted the portrait later.

toward Florence and Rome, and then to Naples to live with Hapsburg relatives. It was a significant moment for her and for the Netherlands, as Mary of Hungary had orders from Charles to implement his harsh edicts, the brutal placards, which were designed to exterminate heresy.[25] Margaret's departure thus removed her from the atmosphere of savage persecution that suddenly permeated the Brussels court. Charles was determined to crush in the Netherlands the religious movements he could not touch in the empire. However, contradictions and calculation in religion remained part of politics, rendering his efforts to enforce the placards haphazard. Lutheran influence was significant, but large numbers of people were attracted to scripture-centered reform that went under the vague name of evangelism, and Anabaptism also made an early appearance. Charles responded with edicts, the placards empowering local inquisitions to eliminate all heresy by imposing death by fire, water, or sword.[26]

For her part, Margaret was abandoning the quiet, outdoor life she had enjoyed with Mary of Hungary to take up the duties and obligations of a Hapsburg princess, although nothing prepared her for the brilliant life she would lead in the vibrant atmosphere of Italy. During her progress to the south she played a passive role, surrounded by symbols of her father's might and of her future in Italy. It was clear that no expense was to be spared for the little girl who was now becoming free of the derision that her birth had attracted in Brussels. It was an expensive display, one that began with a formal departure on 7 January 1533, with an escort of one hundred and fifty mounted soldiers under the command of Philippe de Croy, Marquis of Aerschot.[27] When the cavalcade turned back, Margaret started an arduous, frigid journey with the large entourage necessary to display imperial dignity. The entire convoy was led by Charles de Croy, the Bishop of Tournai. Margaret sat in a sedan chair bearing the emblems of her future husband's titles. On the road, the Count of Fouquemberge, a member of Mary's court, sat with her but when the convoy made a formal entry into a town, pages took his place to emphasize her status. Ten travel wagons with the women of her entourage followed. They were also laden with baggage, provisions for the soldiers, and fodder for the horses and

[25] Blockmans and Mout eds., *The World of Charles V*, 231–232. Charles V responded to the active Protestant community in the Netherlands with placards, ordinances designed to exterminate heresy by imposing frightful executions.

[26] Alastair Duke, "The Face of Popular Religious Dissent in the Netherlands, 1520–1530," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 26 (1975), 41–62.

[27] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 21–23, Lefevre, "*Madama*", 49–56.

beasts that moved the cortege through the mud, snow, and ice. The roads were difficult and it was impossible to keep warm, making the trip less than pleasant. Charles de Croy kept the pace as fast as possible and tried to raise spirits by sending out hunting expeditions to provide game for fresh, hot meals. However, all the women shivered under layers of shawls, huddling together and caring about appearances only when they entered a town.

Margaret also had the company of André de Douvrin, acting now as chamberlain and not as foster father. There were others looking after her, including her fiddler and dancing master, making her very well cared for as she set forth to fulfill her father's ambitions. Her trusted group eased her passage, as did the warmth of her reception at each stop on the journey. She was greeted in every German town by those who wished to honor her father. The party rested at Innsbruck because of harsh winter conditions but then pressed on down the Alps, where snow gave way to fair weather, blossoming trees, and a reception full of color and ceremonies marking her new life. A new group of attendants greeted her there, including Madame de Lannoy, Princess of Sulmone, the widow of the commander at the Battle of Pavia, Charles's greatest victory over France. Although she had reservations about giving such attention to the emperor's natural child, she was to be Margaret's guardian and teacher in Naples.[28] However, there were also representatives of the House of Medici who guided her through a series of lavish receptions in Italian towns where the high positions of her new escorts commanded the attention of the magistrates and people.

The Venetian Marino Sanuto recorded the Italian part of the journey.[29] He described her as seeming twelve rather than ten, as small and thin, and unlike the Hapsburgs except for a little thickness of her lower lip. She held herself well and honorably during the interminable formal receptions in which the elites of city and countryside honored her in extraordinary ceremonies that acknowledged the place of Charles V while also marking her initiation into political life. The often lavish displays mingled symbols of the Netherlands with those of Italy, giving them a unique character and beginning what became known as "cerimonialita margheritiana" within a few short years.[30] At Verona Margaret was finely dressed and wore

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[28] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 26–27, Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 59.

[29] Sanuto, *I Diarii* LVII: 645; Iongh, *Madama*, 38–42.

[30] Sylvia Mantini, "Cerimonie, Ingressi, Funerali: Symboli Potere di Marguerita d'Austria," in Sylvia Mantini, ed., *Margherits d'Austria (1522–1586). Construzioni Politiche e Diplomazia tra Corte Farnese e Monarchia Spagnola* (Rome: 2003), 230–235.

exceptional jewelry as she endured a lengthy ceremony with endless speeches that she obviously could not understand. A great parade of local worthies gathered to be presented to Margaret, and Sanuto was impressed by her patience and the care with which she had been dressed and prepared for the occasion. With the elegant ladies of her entourage, Margaret presented herself beautifully during the long day, which ended with a banquet and dance lasting until 3 a.m. She had to play a role in which her age was never taken into account. One awkward moment came when she was required to make a formal presentation thanking her hosts. Silence ensued because she spoke no Italian, but the day was saved by the Bishop of Tournai who responded with an elaborate Latin statement of thanks for the honor they bestowed on her, saying that the event was never to be forgotten and that she would write about it to her father.[31]

The following day they journeyed to Villafranca and then to Mantua for the night. There the city also put on an elaborate *fèsta*, laboring to make an impression on the slight girl. Margaret took readily to the festivities; the honors and reverences proved that she had become a princess and ceased to be the 'little bastard' living at court, and for this she loved Italy. From Mantua they went south to Tuscany, where Alessandro awaited her. It was an opportunity for Alessandro to show his new authority and her progress became a procession. He wanted to make an ostentatious display of his future bride and the lavish gifts that Charles had bestowed on him to show the Florentines that resistance was hopeless. The triumphal entry of Margaret began at the Medici country estate at Cafaggiolo, the first Tuscan stronghold on the road between Bologna and Florence. There she met fourteen-year-old Catherine de' Medici, the daughter of Lorenzo and perhaps Alessandro's half-sister. She was the future bride of the Duke of Orleans who would become Henry II and thus there was an early encounter between the two women who would have such dramatic parts to play in the ghastly religious strife that would later darken the sixteenth century. Catherine was the model Italian princess, having been well schooled and carefully trained, and in contrast Margaret must have appeared quite the undeveloped northern girl. However, she was the daughter of an emperor, which automatically gave her the status that the Medici still lacked.[32]

Margaret's entry into Florence was on a sparkling day made more brilliant by colorful decorations, music, and ceremony. Alessandro rode out to lead her into the city, displaying the child who was a decisive weapon

[31] Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 60–61.
[32] Leneppe, *Les années italiennes*, 30–35.

against his enemies. It was a stunning day that began two weeks of festivities designed to honor her and the decrees of the father she scarcely knew.[33] Processions and ceremonies took place in sacred and secular sites alike and represented the submission of the city while also honoring her presence. Alessandro was the vital figure for her, and he made her the center of attention in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Margaret never lost her love for Florence whose people greeted her with warmth and kindness even though they loathed Alessandro.[34] Clement VII was delighted and celebrated the arrival of the pledge of the emperor's good relations. He immediately approached Madame de Lannoy with the idea that Margaret should stay in Florence to be raised and tutored. However, Charles V had appointed Madam de Lannoy precisely because of her understanding of his wishes and she remained resolute in the plan to take Margaret on to Naples.

Thus, on April 27, Margaret continued her journey to Rome, where there was yet another splendid entry on May 5. Her procession was accompanied by the princes of the church and all the ambassadors at the papal court. Rigid ceremonial procedures were followed and Margaret was given personal place as a future duchess among the Roman nobility. She was also surrounded by symbols of imperial dignity as she performed reverences honoring Clement VII as pope. The festivities lasted for days and included elaborate gatherings involving all of Rome's elite families. These pleasant events were the first stage of a strong relationship between Margaret and Rome.[35] Clement had not abandoned his hope that Margaret would remain under his supervision and continued the contest of wills with the emperor over the young princess who was a cornerstone in the political plans of each. Alessandro came to Rome to take part in the ceremonies, another display of power and pomp that mingled Roman, papal, and imperial symbols. Margaret must have noted how her companions from the Netherlands were overshadowed by the grandeur and glory of the papal court. On May 9, the party left Rome in the midst of another elaborate formal display, but thereafter the ceremonies were over and Margaret began three years of leading a modest, structured life in the care of Madame de Lannoy.

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[33] Manuela Belardini, "Margherits d'Austria, Sposa e Vedova del Duca Alessandro de' Medici," in Mantini, *Margherita d'Austria*, 28–29, Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 67.

[34] Leneppe, *Les années italiennes*, 43; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 28.

[35] Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 68–71.

In Naples, Margaret lived in the Castel Pizzofalcone, perched above the beautiful city and bay. At that court, the power of Spain dominated and the style of life reflected its etiquette. André de Douvrin saw no purpose in staying and asked leave to return to Brussels with others who had made the journey. Madame de Lannoy was now the dominant guardian of Margaret and had instructions to teach her the languages, manners, and customs necessary for a Hapsburg princess. The glorious experiences of the previous month ended abruptly and Margaret had to undertake serious study under stern direction. Charles V wanted her to be capable of demonstrating her worthiness as a Hapsburg. He wrote directly to Madame de Lannoy giving precise details on what Margaret should study and how she should behave. Charles also gave her the title of his late aunt and she was thereafter Margaret of Austria.[36] Educated in language and literature, Margaret was also influenced by Italian culture and it became part of her personality and behavior as she matured. The training was not without spirituality, but the essence of her learning was humanistic. Margaret also traveled in the areas ruled by Naples, including Abruzzo, a place that she would come to rule personally in the last years of her life.[37] In the meantime, her future was not fully settled, for Charles still watched Clement VII warily, and fear and defiance characterized their diplomatic exchanges. The pope continued to resist the emperor's demand that he convene a general council of the church, and he also negotiated with Francis I, Charles's arch enemy, on the marriage of his niece Catherine to Henry. While the pope was pleased with the success of that venture, he worried that Charles might see it as an excuse to delay Margaret's marriage, thus jeopardizing Medici rule in Florence.

However, those concerns paled compared with the damage his own family did to his plans. Ippolito di Medici, recently made a cardinal, suddenly expressed vast political ambition and demanded that he marry Margaret and rule Florence instead of Alessandro. All Rome, which knew the family well, experienced the strife and expected murder and mayhem to follow.[38] Ippolito terrified the pope, and the Venetian ambassador Gasparo Catarini watched with glee, relishing the impossible impasse of the entanglements. To make matters worse, Clement VII suddenly died on 26 September 1534 causing Charles to rethink the marriage as he advanced

[36] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 31–33.
[37] Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 74–75.
[38] Hibbert, *The House of Medici*, 252–254.

the candidacy of a Farnese as pope. For the moment, he left matters as they were and Margaret remained betrothed to Alessandro. She continued to receive instruction from Madame de Lannoy in Italian, French, Spanish, and Latin. Later she identified most closely with Italian, but Madame de Lannoy left little time for that in 1535 as she tried to make Margaret capable of meeting the far-reaching tasks imposed by her birth. Margaret's routine was suddenly overturned because it was at just that time that Charles, concerned with the Turkish presence in the western Mediterranean, carried out an assault on Tunis. Following his victory, he came to Italy and directly into her life.[39]

In November 1535, Charles arrived in Naples and Margaret made a formal appearance as a dutiful, obedient daughter. However, the intrigues of Iippolito continued to cloud her marriage because he made no secret of plans to ruin and even poison Alessandro. A life of dread and suspicion settled over the Medici, and the situation only eased when Ippolito died quite suddenly from either malaria or poison. Charles did his part to increase the tension by receiving a delegation of Florentines representing those who suffered exile under the Medici. The opponents of Alessandro were leaders of three great families of the city—the Strozzi, the Salviati, and the Soderini—all united in lamenting the unworthy choice that Charles had made for his daughter in Alessandro.[40] Their spokesman, the historian Jacopo Nardi, accused Alessandro of crimes against people and property, saying that he attacked individuals and confiscated goods at will. No woman in Florence was safe from him and he inflicted humiliation and rape even on nuns. Nardi questioned how the emperor could marry his daughter to such a man. He also criticized the new fortress, the Fortezza da Basso, which Alessandro had constructed as a prison and execution ground for hitherto free citizens. However, the emperor then heard an eloquent, if false, rebuttal of the charges by Alessandro's spokesman Francesco Guicciardini, who claimed that all Florence honored the new duke for his virtue. Charles chose to accept Guicciardini's version of events.[41]

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[39] Tracy, *Emperor Charles V*, 145–156. The successful venture against Tunis was balanced by the continued difficulties battling the Turks along the Danube and by renewal of war with France, both of which shortened Charles's stay in Naples in 1535.

[40] Guicciardini, *Storia*, 1065; Hibbert, *The House of Medici*, 253–254.

[41] Iongh, *Madama*, 56–59; Jacopo Nardi fled with the major families of Florence after the Medici restoration. He is famous for his *Storia della città di Firenze*.

While Charles had to consider many things in dealing with the Medici, the happiness of his daughter was not one of them. In his political reckoning, seeking personal comfort and solace was a weakness reserved for those who did not rule. The essential consideration was the favorable attitude that Alessandro's opponents had toward France, and even if Alessandro committed horrible crimes, they paled in comparison with possible political gain for his enemy. Charles never saw the personal factor in his decision to spurn the advice of the Florentine representatives. He invited Alessandro to Naples to conclude the marriage arrangements, but cannily repeated the accusations to intimidate him and force him to renounce a portion of Margaret's dowry. Otherwise, Charles proved to be a man of his word, although even in an unsentimental age the marriage was an affront. Euphoric, Alessandro planned to secure his position by marrying Margaret or at least moving her closer to Florence. In February 1536, Charles appointed Antoine Perrenot, the eighteen-year-old son of his advisor Granvelle, to carry out the marriage negotiations. He concluded the negotiations quickly and the marriage was scheduled for the following day, although Alessandro had to agree not to consummate the union for six months. The Florentines who had protested felt utterly betrayed and none of them participated in the ceremony that committed the thirteen-year-old Margaret to the twenty-seven-year old Alessandro. The wedding, a civil ceremony that coincided with carnival before the start of Lent, was a lavish festival that exhibited the splendor of the aristocracy of Spain, Naples, and Florence.[42] Afterwards Margaret continued to be under the direction of Madame de Lannoy, but Alessandro had the right to appoint members of her household and to control her dowry. In addition, Alessandro received a reaffirmation of imperial protection.

For Margaret the early time in Italy was a period of good fortune. She had grown to be more confident and assertive under Madame de Lannoy's tutelage and had loved the company of her father in Naples. The ceremony and the exchange of rings simply brought to fruition policies set while she was yet in her crib, but the bond was important for her personally, and Italy became a new social and political arena in which she was welcome and not encumbered by birth or the attitude of her relatives. The marriage was the first stage in the growth of an independent, politically astute

[42] Gachard, *Journal* 2: 116. Vandanesse's account is simple: "... the day before Lent Alessandro de' Medici, Duke of Florence, married in Capua to ... the bastard daughter of His Majesty in his very presence"; Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 83–92.

woman who would come to be known as Madama. She moved to Florence in May, and her voyage north, by sea to Pisa protected by imperial galleys and then on by land with an escort led by the artist and biographer Giorgio Vasari, was once again highly ceremonial, particularly when she entered Medici possessions at Villa Poggio at Caiano. From there Margaret went to Prato and then to Florence, where she arrived at midnight on May 31. She was conducted into the city in a torchlight procession that passed by Florence's major buildings, all of which, both public and private, were illuminated and decorated. The procession ended at the cloister of San Marco where an apartment had been prepared for her. On June 13, Margaret moved to the Palazzo Ottaviano, newly redecorated for her by Vasari.[43] On the following day the marriage was consecrated in a religious ceremony and a banquet was held at the Medici Palace. The festivities were disrupted by a solar eclipse, and the gray half-light dampened spirits and caused anxiety and dismay. Alessandro's opponents regarded it as a bad omen, lessening the luster of the tyrant's star that had seemed so high and bright in the heavens.[44]

When the sun reappeared, the festivities continued with a ball and the presentation of a play written by Lorenzaccio de' Medici, a constant companion of Allesandro and the architect of his licentious lifestyle.[45] The night ended with a torchlit military display, including a mock assault on a castle. Although Alessandro wanted it to be thought that Margaret joined him in the Medici Palace that night and had Benedetto Varchi include the idea in his history of the event, Charles V had given orders to Madame de Lannoy for there to be only the appearance of a union.[46] Alessandro had tried to exclude Madame de Lannoy after the marriage at Naples, but she remained. Margaret continued to live as a maiden, sheltered from the reality of her situation by her own innocence and the knowledge and tact of her guardian. She fancied herself in paradise, hunting in the nearby hills and living in a circle of pleasant people in a beautiful city.[47] Yet just beyond her household where she lived in a refined, cultured atmosphere was a

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[43] Leneppe, *Les Années Iitaliennes*, 35–50.

[44] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 37–38; M. Belardini, "Margherite d'Austria…" in Mantini. *Margherite d'Austria*, 32–33.

[45] Cochrane, *Florence*, 13–15. Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici (1514–1547) was his proper name and he was a member of a lateral branch of the Medici family. He was a cousin to Cosimo, who succeeded Alessandro. Cosimo later placed a price on his head to prevent his return to Florence.

[46] Leneppe, *Les Années Italiennes*, 56–58; Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, 3: 250–286.

[47] Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 93.

threatening court dominated by a hated man. Alessandro, the terror of his subjects, acted in a loving and tender fashion only before the young girl whose father controlled his future. The Florentines treated Margaret with polite sympathy, for Alessandro had created many victims in his lust for power and some wondered if the emperor would allow him to devour her.

Charles, who was preoccupied with the renewal of the bitter conflict with France, faced battles in Italy, Provence, and the Netherlands. The strife reinforced his desire to have Florence as an ally and Charles summoned Alessandro to meet with him in Genoa in October and again treated him well. Only the presence of Pier Luigi Farnese troubled the meeting, as Alessandro quite rightly suspected that the emperor was seeking clients in Italy other than the Medici. However, he left thinking that his position in Florence was unassailable. As he was returning to Florence, Madame de Lannoy was abandoning the city and her guardianship of Margaret. Her place was taken by Catherine Varano, Countess of Camarino, a creature of Alessandro's. Madame de Lannoy was distressed by all that she had experienced in her six months in Florence. She saw the court as reveling in misdeeds and full of profligates, and thus a fatal environment for Margaret. Alessandro was inseparable from the increasingly vicious Lorenzaccio. Benvenuto Cellini worked for Alessandro during that period and consequently had only positive things to say about the new duke, but he had only contempt and disdain for Lorenzaccio. The family attempted to improve Alessandro's habits and his image in Florence, sending Cardinal Innocenzo Cibo to guide the young ruler. They also commissioned portraits from Giorgio Vasari and Jacopo Pontormo to present Alessandro in the image of a statesman.[48] However, even their work did not moderate the hostility of the Florentines toward their ruler and the unsettled image of the Medici was not improved by Alessandro's menacing behavior.[49] Cardinal Cibo, unable to change Alessandro, turned his attention to protecting Margaret.

Unknown to all, Lorenzaccio, filled with ambition and jealousy, harbored little affection for Alessandro and concocted a scheme to kill him. Lorenzaccio falsely promised to arrange an encounter with a beautiful and virtuous relative for Alessandro, lured him to his own rooms, and helped

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[48] Vanessa Walker-Oakes, "Representing the Perfect Prince: Pontormo's *Alessandro de' Medici*," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 32: Article 6, 126–147 (2001).

[49] Cellini, *La Vita*, 667–672; Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Du Vere tr. (New York: 1996), 2: 432–434.

to assassinate him. It was a clumsy, savage struggle from which Lorenzaccio fled with a serious wound. Alessandro, whose debaucheries often kept him away, was not even missed for a day while the annual Epiphany celebration absorbed the attention of Florence. When the bloody corpse was finally found, there was lamentation among the courtiers who carried his remains to the church of San Lorenzo, but pleasure dominated the citizens of Florence.[50]

On 7 January 1537, Cardinal Cibo, acting as Charles's representative in Florence, carried the dreadful news to Margaret, whose response betrayed a sincere despair. She had known nothing of Alessandro's life because he had appeared only at his best before her. Things then moved very quickly for her and her life suddenly seemed dominated by disappointment.[51] Imperial troops curbed the anger of the people toward the Medici, but Cardinal Cibo feared an insurrection and moved Margaret into the citadel, taking along a small group from the Palazzo de Medici. Cosimo de Medici was selected to be the next ruler, and his mother did what she could to try to arrange a marriage between her son and Margaret.[52] But the emperor saw a weakness in the arrangement, for Cosimo's mother, Maria Salviati, was not an aristocrat, an issue Charles had never raised regarding Alessandro. Moreover, Florence was securely in the imperial camp and Margaret could be used to cement relations with yet another Italian house. While Charles was interested in having Margaret derive money and a title from the Medici, he had no desire to include Cosimo in his political reckoning and ordered her to leave Florence and to expect new guardians appointed from his new political center, the Spanish court. Margaret resided in the fortress, but moved freely in Florence until her father ordered her to withdraw to Prato. The departure was quite difficult for Margaret; in her brief time in Florence she had flourished, becoming a composed young woman who was worldly wise and very aware of her status. Confident and already showing a strong character, she made her first public presentation in a speech, thanking Cosimo and the Florentine magistrates before departing in the company of Cardinal Cibo, now joined by the Count of Cifuentes and three hundred Spanish troops.[53]

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[50] Cochrane, *Florence*, 15–16; Hibbert *The House of Medici*, 255; Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 139.

[51] Leneppe, *Les années italiennes*, 60–62.

[52] Cochrane, *Florence*, 18–35.

[53] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 46–47, Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 103.

Margaret left for Prato with very fond memories and, unfortunately, a growing desire to return to Florence as Cosimo's wife. Charles met with his council in Spain and it was clear that she would remain in Italy, but not return to Florence. He sought new alliances and cast about in Italy for a marriage that would benefit him and the needs, as he saw them, of Christendom. The house of Farnese represented one opportunity and Pope Paul III, who was the head of the family, dispatched Cardinal Giovanni Guidiccioni, a man of letters and a skilled diplomat, to begin discussions with Charles.[54] These negotiations initiated the next phase of Margaret's life, for the pope eagerly wanted her presence in his upstart and poorly regarded house, and Charles desired the pope's assistance throughout Christendom.[55] Paul's grandson Ottavio, although only twelve, was offered to Charles as Margaret's new consort. The pope promised Parma and Piacenza to the couple if Charles, who also claimed them as emperor, would make a similar grant as Margaret's dowry.

Without the least thought given to Margaret's feelings, Charles and his council viewed Alesssandro's death as an unexpected gift. The marriage had produced the required results, and now a "beloved daughter" was poised to assist his policies without great cost. After all, she was a rich widow since Cardinal Cibo had arranged that she continue to enjoy special status from the Medici along with a large pension for at least three years even as she claimed an impressive inheritance from Alessandro based on her marriage contract.[56] The Medici also surrendered their villa in Rome, Guilio de'Medici's beautiful palace which would be renamed the Villa Madama.[57] As the result of the negotiations with the Farneses, the pope also began to give her gifts, and Charles went out of his way to raise her status, giving her greater claims to titles in Abruzzo. Issues of war and peace and the calling of a general church council also entered the talks, and the French ambassador thought that Charles had hooked the pope like a fish.[58] The emperor concluded the contract with the Farneses in June 1538, pledging Margaret to Ottavio. Continued papal intrigues with France troubled the arrangement, so Margaret remained

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[54] Daniela Morsia, "Da una corte all'altura: il matrimonio con Ottavio Farnese," in S. Mantini, *Margherita d'Austria*, 55–58. The Farneses were well represented by Giovanni Guidiccioni (1500–1541), a poet, diplomat, and prince of the church used in all of their difficult negotiations. He was Pier Luigi Farnese's personal secretary.

[55] Leneppe, *Les années italiennes*, 63.

[56] Lefevre, *"Madama"* 103–106.

[57] Iongh, *Madama*, 80; Varchi, *Storia Fiorintina*, 635.

[58] Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 63; Iongh, *Madama*, 80–81.

in Prato. There she lived in freedom, hunting but also enjoying a modest court of musicians and poets whose presence tied her ever more closely to Florence.[59] Clearly demonstrating his preference for the influence of the Spanish court in Italy, Charles dispatched Don Lope Hurtado de Mendoza and his wife Doña Margarita de Rojas from Madrid to guide and supervise his daughter.[60] The change was done in haste and in great secrecy while negotiations were continuing with the pope over the marriage. Margaret was thus given training in Spanish dress, ways, and etiquette even as her continued place in Italy was being secured.

In Prato, the arrival of Mendoza and his wife changed life abruptly for Margaret. She had spent her time hunting and was often gone for days. Her father ordered Mendoza to put an end to such ventures, for they did not earn her proper respect, and maintaining her status was vital. Thus in November 1537, Margaret's lighthearted life stopped and her introduction to the rituals and demands of Spanish etiquette began. When she found out that the change was part of preparing her for a marriage into the Farnese family the following year, she was horrified. By then she knew of the evil nature of her late husband, but had become quite attracted to his successor Cosimo. Nor did Margaret wish to leave Florence and as the details of Charles's arrangement became known to her, the fifteen-year-old girl rebelled against her duplicitous father who had brought her into the world of the Medici and now wished to snatch her away from them and place her in the hands of the Farnese family. Clearly her Medici contacts had given her a grim, and accurate, vision of the Farneses whose military successes brought them into prominent positions despite promiscuous and violent behavior startling even by Italian standards.[61] Mendoza put the prospect of the wedding, which appeared horrible and offensive to her, in terms of her duty to her father's policies and to the order of Christendom. Cosimo had become her dear friend and had informed her of Charles's refusal to consider his own marriage proposal. In response, in July 1538, she wrote to her father refusing to consent to the marriage for reasons she wished to offer to him in person. In her letter, Margaret decried the prospect of marrying a man who was brutish, improper, unrefined, and a swine. Since she had yet to meet Ottavio, Margaret had

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[59] Manuela Belardini, "Margherita d'Austria, sposa e vedova del duca Alessandro de'Medici," in S. Mantini, *Margherite d'Austria*, 38–42.

[60] Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 60–62; Iongh, *Madama*, 93–96, Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 109–116.

[61] Pier Luigi, Ottavio's father, faced frequent accusations of violent behavior, including the rape of a youthful bishop who died shortly after the attack. Iongh, *Madama*, 106.

to have received the information from those around her. She knew that this was a bold move and would offend both Charles V and the pope. Since Margaret feared angering her father and had assured the imperial ambassador in Rome, the Marquis de Aguilar, of her undying submission, the letter raised questions about Mendoza's role.[62] Charles responded by dispatching yet another member of the Spanish court to support and encourage her. The Archbishop of Santiago de Compostella journeyed to Prato with orders to bring Margaret out of Tuscany. She acquiesced, but she kept hoping that the wedding, which she regarded as purely political, would not proceed.

Her hopes were dashed in October when Charles sent orders to take her to Rome to speed up the process. With her rise in status, Margaret now led the procession and was accompanied for part of the way by the leaders of Florence, including Cosimo. Charles also had orders about the wedding and other policy matters sent to her directly. Her letter had awakened concerns at court about her reliability, and Mendoza attempted to intervene on her behalf, writing to the emperor to foster fatherly concerns and to moderate the wrath Margaret had aroused. He emphasized her obedient nature and her wish to follow his directions. Clearly he attempted to extricate himself from any possible imperial anger as well, and he had Margaret write directly to the pope stating that she was still a child and thus needed only to know the terms of the agreement so that she would know what duties to fulfill. Aguilar still worried that she would obstruct the marriage, but the journey south continued. The caravan stopped for three weeks in Siena, where she had a final meeting with Cosimo. Margaret would never again see him or Florence. However, it was during her stay that Margaret also encountered Laudomia Forteguerri, a native of Siena with a reputation for poetry, beauty, and abilities as a warrior. The two became close and Forteguerri wrote five love sonnets to Margaret.[63]

3. *The Farnese Marriage*

The second phase of her Italian life began as she left Siena. The "cerimonialita margheritiana" adopted a new form, reflecting Margaret's

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[62] Ines d'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio intimo di Margherita d'Austria* (Naples, 1919) 20–21; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 53–56.

[63] Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 68–74; the sonnets are in Konrad Eisenbilcher, *Laudomia Forteguerri Loves Margaret of Austria* in F. Canadé Sautman and P. Sheingorn eds., *Same Sex Love and Desire Among Women in the Middle Ages* (New York, 2001) 299–301.

own personality, aspirations, and drive. Margaret set aside her mourning garb and thereafter dressed in the fashion of the Spanish court. She met her prospective father-in-law, Pier Luigi Farnese, on October 25, and was showered with gifts and honors, including a cardinal's hat for her spiritual advisor, the Archbishop Santiago. Pier Luigi was obviously impressed by the higher status that feting an imperial child conferred on him, and Margaret appeared in all of her finery for the encounter. This was the beginning of the transformation of the Farnese house, acknowledging its new power and granting it a measure of respect. He joined her caravan for the remainder of the journey, a procession that began October 28 and ended November 3 in Rome, where a spectacular welcome awaited Margaret. The pope staged a reception that was lavish even by Roman standards, starting with sending members of his family out in separate groups to join Margaret, enlarging her procession each day as it came closer to Rome. Finally the leading citizens joined, each carrying reliefs and devices displaying symbols of power, making it appear like a triumphal procession of ancient imperial Rome. She was feted as the girl who brought freedom to Italy. Margaret was richly adorned to delight the people as she was conducted to Castel Sant'Angelo to meet Paul III and Ottavio. When he had been a cardinal Paul III had seen her during her first visit to Rome, and now he encountered an elegant young woman who came forward to kiss his hand. Although Margaret was fulfilling her duty to her father and the ceremony meant little to her, the pope was overwhelmed, greeted her effusively in Italian, and then conducted her and her ladies to his private apartments, where he gave them all rich jewels.[64]

At the banquet that followed, Pier Luigi pressed Margaret for her thoughts on her destiny, his son and her future husband. Her rejoinder was a bitter remark about Ottavio's youth and an expression of contempt for the Farnese family, which was so new to politics. Margaret was beginning to resist the cynical world in which she was brokered in a cold display of power. Ottavio made no impression, except that she thought he acted like a sheep, but his older brother Alessandro paid far too much attention to her. Although he was a cardinal, he dreamed of being the emperor's son-in-law, but he had to settle for Margaret's friendship.[65] The festivities lasted late, and then Margaret was taken to her temporary residence, the

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[64] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 57–59; S. Mantini, "Ceremonie, Ingressi, Funerali," in Mantini, *Margherits d'Austria*, 236–238, Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 124.

[65] Iongh, *Madama*, 110–111.

Palazzo Cesi, where over a hundred women waited to greet her. It was her initial experience as *prima donna*, the first woman of Rome, a place she would occupy for years. She soon moved into the Medici Palace, built by Giulio de' Medici before he became Clement VII. While the acquisition was not supposed to be permanent, Charles regarded it as part of reclaiming Margaret's dowry and the building was renamed the Palazzo Madama. She also occupied the Villa Madama on the outskirts of Rome, at that time a country residence of exceptional beauty, also built by the previous pope. Furthermore, Margaret protected her interests and herself by obtaining a fiefdom and fortification near Arsoli, a place on the border between the Papal States and the kingdom of Naples. Named the Castel Madama, it became a refuge for her whenever times became troubled in Rome. When she had no fears, the Palazzo and the Villa served as the centers for her political life. Freely playing on her imperial birth, she created a distinctive court where the power of her own ideas and personality dominated. Surrounded by aristocratic and spiritual figures, she became active in Rome's ceremonial life, seeking precedence and displaying Hapsburg regalia at every opportunity.[66]

Much against her will, Margaret had to be involved with the Farnese family, but her life in Rome otherwise suited her wonderfully. She had developed a strong sense of pride in her imperial status and she was not awed by the grandeur and refinement of Roman political and ecclesiastical society. Paul III wanted to be her mentor, to teach her the ways of manipulating people, which was his special art, but he misjudged his subject. Despite her youth, she had already learned those lessons from hard experience. Sensing that the pope was primed for an excellent settlement, the Bishop of Aquila asked her to give him permission to complete the marriage negotiations. Unswerving in her opposition, Margaret deliberately delayed the process, withholding her ratification of the initial agreement and refusing to say the crucial word "yes" at the betrothal ceremony. She could not appeal to her father again, for her wishes ran contrary to his Italian policy. In Spain, the council assumed that her residence in Rome implied her consent. Her more sympathetic Spanish advisors in Rome knew that was not true, but could do nothing to help her.

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[66] Mantini, "Ceremonie, Ingresso e Funerali," in Mantini, *Margherita d'Austria*, 239–240; and Renato Lefevre, *Villa Madama* (Rome: 1973), 169–183.

Paul III sought to win her consent with gifts of jewelry and a series of elaborately staged festivities. All the gatherings mixed elegant presentations with violent events and had a strange, sometimes sordid, character that was an undercurrent peculiar to the Farnese family. Nevertheless the papal court continued to attract exceptional artists and musicians. Michelangelo was foremost but was joined by the best musicians, entertainers, decorators, designers, and cooks available in Italy. Margaret thrived in this atmosphere. Pleased by the pope's gifts, Margaret sat next to him at banquets and dances and never feared to speak frankly. She was striking, with dark red hair surrounding an intelligent face with a high forehead and sharp blue eyes, giving her a dramatic presence. Her appearance was so different from that of the women around her who were often much more beautiful but who lacked her extraordinary style. Since she dressed in the Spanish manner, she could have attracted ridicule, but she was comely and lively, and above all else she enthralled the pope and thus made a sensation at court, all of which made her life there easier. The pope saw in her the presence, manners, and ways that would benefit the future generations of Farneses he envisioned, and he wanted her consent for a Christmas wedding.

Ottavio, her betrothed, had played little part in the festivities and Margaret openly ignored the awkward boy. There was even gossip that questioned his readiness for marriage, but his father pushed ahead. Hoping to influence her, they decorated the entire city. To delay matters, Margaret became directly involved with the amount of the award she would receive from the family for the marriage. The issue attracted the attention of everyone and brought credit to no one according to the English ambassador. He noted that it was amazing to see how Margaret, a bastard, was at an advantage in the negotiations, for the Farneses needed her just as Charles did in the chess match that was Italian political life.[67] Margaret, obdurate, delayed matters even further by wanting to know the exact consequences of her union with the Farneses in terms of money, lands, and titles. Charles, irritated, wrote to her advisor Mendoza and ordered him to hurry matters along.

Margaret had continued to hope that the plans were all part of a political maneuver by her father and that she would be spared the marriage, but now the reality of Ottavio loomed before her. She had to avoid the appearance of disobedience but still knew that she was performing an

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[67] Iongh, *Madama*, 120; Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 142–143.

enormous service. In her brief contact with the Farnese family, she had developed unbounded scorn for all that they had been and were at that time. The Spanish encouraged her aversion even as they demanded that she do her duty, never questioning whether the glittering girl they admired should be joined to a family of crude adventurers. Mendoza thought that the family was a blight, and Margaret, who always compared them unfavorably with the Medici, agreed, particularly with regard to Pier Luigi, the sheep-like Ottavio, and his crass sister, Vittoria. Margaret obviously regretted the match, and she carried that attitude into all her meetings with Ottavio, who was petrified by her haughty coldness. However, the pope forged ahead with the blessings of the emperor, even arranging an impromptu ceremony in the Sistine Chapel and tricking the recalcitrant Margaret into saying yes as Ottavio presented her with a ring.[68]

The ensuing festivities dazzled Rome but failed to move her to accept Ottavio. She did not interrupt her luxurious life in the Palazzo Madama and her refusal to consummate the marriage became a scandal. Margaret grasped at one excuse after another, but the imperial ambassador and the pope reminded her of her duty. A nasty cold and fatigue gave her an excuse to avoid an arranged encounter with Ottavio that was to have consummated their marriage. The bride made no secret of her reluctance, but the pope also made his impatience clear.[69] Margaret, announcing in advance that it would be a fiasco, finally controlled her dread and on December 30, a date picked by the papal astrologer, they slept together, after which Ottavio bragged that he had taken her completely, boasting in the jargon of a chivalric tournament. Margaret had quite a different version of events, saying at first that it was a night of uninterrupted sleep, but then adding that the sad wretch she had married had been unable to do anything other than wet himself.[70] Ottavio never forgave her for telling. She sent a message to her father claiming that it was not too late to void the marriage, but the initial reaction in Rome was based on Ottavio's story and the Farneses showered more jewels on her at yet another series of parties. The pope organized elaborate festivals for carnival in 1539 to celebrate the marriage and the victory he planned for Christendom over unbelievers, both heretics and Turks. Some of the festivities, such as a huge and bloody bullfight before St. Peter's basilica, had a certain lack of

[68] Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 74, Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 125–129.
[69] Lefevre, *"Madama"* 128–130.
[70] Pietro Romano, *Pasquino e la Satira in Roma* (Rome: 1932), 24.

elegance, but Margaret went through all of them in an effort to get along with the Farneses. As a reward, she became Duchess of Camerino and of Penne, lands held by Charles V in the Kingdom of Naples.[71]

She also set about fulfilling her functions in Rome, keeping away from Ottavio but otherwise being enthusiastic about her life. Intelligent and lively, Margaret was the center of a large household while she also became more involved in the affairs of Abruzzo and Penne. During 1540, Margaret made friends with the exceptional Vittoria Colonna, a widow whose passion for religion and art brought her into contact with the most important figures of her day, including Michelangelo and Ignatius Loyola, who arrived in Rome that year seeking approval for his new order, the Society of Jesus. However, Colonna kept company with other churchmen associated with the Augustinian tradition and was thus very close to Protestantism. She influenced Margaret to take one of them, Battista Pallavicino of the Oratory of Divine Love, as her confessor. As months passed, her resolve to stay apart from Ottavio infuriated the family and in 1540 Pier Luigi accused her of being enchanted by the Spaniards, notably Mendoza, and by her confessor, who was arrested and turned over to the Inquisition for interrogation. Pallavicino's belief in predestination and the elect did not come up, but under torture he confessed to employing sorcery, necromancy, and diabolical ways to render Ottavio and Margaret disagreeable to one another. On his release, he instantly recanted, but the sordid affair had done its damage.[72] Mendoza fled Rome leaving an infuriated and fearful Margaret who began to spend more time in the security of the Castel Sant'Angelo and at the Villa Madama. The true nature of her marriage came to be common knowledge in Rome, initiating a long period of discord during which according to those in her court who served Charles, Margaret became increasingly despondent and worried that her birth would be used against her. The papal court divided on the issue and there were hostile episodes, and Margaret withdrew even further by staying at the Castel Madama. Charles, aware of the problems, almost ordered her to leave for Naples, but then came to regard the matter as merely an episode in the plots, posturing, and intrigues that made up the ordinary drama of Italian life.[73]

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[71] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 23; D. Morsia, "Da una corte all'altura", in S. Mantini, *Margherite d'Austria*, 60–63.

[72] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 68–69; Giampiero Brunelli, "Tra eretici e gesuiti. I primi anni di Margherita a Roma," in S. Mantini, *Margherita d'Austria*, 65–83.

[73] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 24.

Vittoria Colonna, thirty years older than Margaret, had compassion for her plight and offered sympathy, but her only advice was for the unwilling bride to enter a convent. However, she refused to withdraw and her resolute behavior against the Farneses actually benefitted her reputation. Benvenuto Cellini, who had been thrown into the darkest cells of the Castel Sant' Angelo on false charges leveled by Pier Luigi and the pope, tried to take refuge with Margaret when he escaped from prison. Badly injured, he remembered her from Florence and knew that her miserable relations with the Farneses would make her glad to receive him, but he was taken by creatures of the pope on the steps of her palace.[74] The episode was characteristic of Rome under the Farneses and clearly demonstrated their venomous character. Cellini's account of his imprisonment provided a grim reminder of the wretched ways of the family that Charles had compelled his daughter to join.

Meanwhile, Paul III sent an envoy to Charles in Spain to complain about Margaret's behavior. Charles responded by sending Jean d'Andelot from the Netherlands with a personal order to Margaret to accede to the pope's wishes, imposing a cruel policy both emotionally and physically on his unhappy daughter. D'Andelot was to remain with Margaret to offer guidance in accord with Charles's wishes. By the end of 1540, everyone knew that the marriage was a farce and Romans delighted in debating whether she was cold or he impotent; stories and epigrams appeared everywhere. Her father's envoy put real pressure on her to consummate the marriage, but Margaret had become a master of deception, meeting him with elegant posturing, refined dissimulation, and studied insincerity to avoid direct responses. Yet another appeal to her father resulted in his writing a personal letter, the first he ever sent to Margaret. In it he provided only cold sympathy and a firm call to duty. As a result, she allowed Ottavio back into her bed and received more of Camerino from the pope as recompense for being with a man she detested.[75]

Paul III was wise enough not to blame Margaret for the three-year delay in the marriage and again he sent lavish gifts. Indeed, his efforts to please her were so extravagant that his behavior became suspect. Margaret continued to be the most talked about woman in Rome, and also the most powerful. Her court was a center of diplomatic and even church activity by the time she was twenty, and Charles V had the perfect representative

[74] Cellini, *La Vita*, 734–735.
[75] Leneppe, *Les Années Italiennes*, pp. 82–86.

in Rome in the Palazzo Madama. With her sharp intelligence and talent for intrigue, Margaret threw herself into politics and derived satisfaction from it as she followed a solidly pro-imperial and pro-Medici policy in her conversations. Her father encouraged this by maintaining a representative in her court. In theory the position was to assist Margaret, but it benefitted Charles's interests as well.[76] Margaret also served her own ambition, trying to advance the despised Ottavio at the expense of other Farnese interests, since she felt that her married position was below what it should be. Her court was austere by Roman standards, and she took no lovers out of disinterest in men and an avid concern for politics. She did stage events and spectacles on the Piazza Navonna, engaging herself in the often violent displays so favored by the Romans. In one mock battle four men died and many were wounded. Vittoria Colonna advised her that she should also develop a charitable purpose in life to find peace of mind, and she encouraged Margaret to have Ignatius Loyola supervise her increased devotions. He worked directly with the most hopeless in Rome and she was drawn into his efforts, particularly when a near famine occurred and she established a refuge for destitute women.[77]

However, Margaret had a new source of anxiety that year. She was uneasy about the relationship between her new advisor, the Netherlander d'Andelot, and the pope, and wrote to Charles asking that he always be sure that she had someone trustworthy close to her.[78] The missive expressed considerable despair and a hope that they could meet because she needed advice on so much that she could not trust to a letter. Charles agreed to a meeting the following year in Italy. He was planning an expedition against the Turks in Algiers and needed to confer with the pope. The expectation of seeing her father after five years gave her great pleasure, as did Ottavio's departure to escort Charles on the trip to Italy. The pope and the emperor were to meet at Lucca, and Margaret journeyed there, arriving in nearby La Spezia on 10 September 1541. Amidst the elaborate ceremonies, including one in Lucca cathedral with thrones for Charles and Paul side by side next to the high altar, Margaret met with him several times. Charles, forewarned about her insecurities, tried to convince his daughter of her own worth, but during a second meeting, he stressed the importance of accepting her fate and having a baby with Ottavio. D'Andelot, who was leaving

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[76] Iongh, *Madama*, 137.

[77] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 75–78; Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 163–166.

[78] Iongh, *Madama*, 140–141 and 147, which includes the letter Charles sent to Margaret that ignored her feelings and told her to heed D'Andelot's advice.

for Africa with Charles, also wrote to encourage her to accept Ottavio even though he knew the depth of her hatred of the boy. He argued that a child would bring her contentment.[79] Since Ottavio was also going to Africa on the expedition against the Turks, the matter required immediate action. She made an effort, going to the baths at Casciana to meet Ottavio, but he had to leave before she allowed any encounter.

The assault on Algiers was a near disaster, with storms wrecking part of the huge fleet of a hundred ships, and the Turks putting up much fiercer resistance than anticipated.[80] The first news that reached Rome reported both Charles and Ottavio dead. Although the report was erroneous, it was not corrected quickly enough to prevent members of the Farnese family from expressing delight at the emperor's death. Much had to be taken back, but it was never forgotten. Margaret was surprised to hear that Ottavio had done very well, had nearly been killed, and had earned a major promotion from Charles.[81] Suddenly Margaret had reason to be proud and during 1542, the pope asked Charles to provide a better title for Ottavio. However, the Algiers venture had damaged Charles's stature, and made him seem vulnerable as he faced threats from France, financial woes, and religious issues simultaneously. Margaret's position in the middle of Farnese intrigues faded into the background. Even though she had again won over the pope, who actively sought her political advice, it was a melancholy time for her. Pier Luigi had a portrait of her done to mark her twentieth birthday, and it depicts a very somber woman.[82] In 1543 Charles again visited Italy, and Margaret met him at Pavia along with Ottavio, who had developed into a striking young man. Charles clearly wanted them together, and Margaret just as clearly wanted him to grant them the Duchy of Milan. Margaret was aware that her half-brother Philip was entering the political picture and that Charles wished to reserve Milan for him because of its great strategic importance. However, she hoped that agreeing to conjugal relations with Ottavio would earn a favorable response to her petition. She did live with him, although with great

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[79] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 25–26; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 79–81; Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 188–292. Vandanesse notes that the Emperor met with "the Duchess of Camerino" in between visits with the pope.

[80] Tracy, *Emperor Charles V*, 164–182.

[81] Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 249–250. Ottavio returned to Spain with Charles and participated in the festivities introducing Philip to power. Margaret was never invited to take part in formal affairs.

[82] The portrait of 1542 is from the school of Raphael and hangs in the Borghese Gallery in Rome.

reservations, doing her duty, and hoping to rise in Charles's estimation as a fully obedient daughter.[83]

Unfortunately, imperial-papal negotiations had not gone well, and Charles had deep suspicions about the Farneses's ambitions and their close relations with France. His Spanish council added its cold calculations, claiming that it would be insane to take Milan away from his son to give it to his bastard daughter and the unscrupulous Farneses, who could allow France to dominate all Italy. The decision put Margaret in a far worse position, for she had so obviously wanted Milan and had not gotten it despite her unwavering obedience to her father. On June 24, Margaret met with him at Busseto near Pavia and begged him not to leave her in an inferior position, which made daily life precarious and unpleasant. Alas, Charles ignored her and gave his full attention to the desperate struggle in the Netherlands against France and heresy. The interests of the daughter he had committed to Italy could wait. He felt that she should be content that Ottavio was coming north with him to earn more fame. Her father thus dismissed her hopes and the meeting, which turned out to be the last the two ever had, ended on a dissonant note.

The emperor gave the Milan matter over to his new ambassador to Rome, Juan de Vega, and he hardly improved Margaret's situation.[84] A hard, ill-mannered person who detested Italians, and particularly Paul III, who turned all negotiations in Rome into confrontations, and Margaret unhappily watched the steady growth of French influence. The Farneses were infuriated and Margaret grew to dislike them even more. They offered the emperor money for advancement in the Italian state system, and the council in Spain wanted to take it, but Charles chose to follow advisors, such as Mendoza, who disdained the family for its persistent treachery and lack of an honorable background.[85] The emperor had taken no note of such protests when he married Margaret into the family, but he heeded them at that moment. Indeed, in 1544, relations between the emperor and the pope degenerated to the point where rumors told of each plotting the death of the other. Margaret felt the immediate effects of the rift as the family became colder towards her while French influence in Rome grew.

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[83] Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 255. Charles met with Margaret every day but still failed to include her in any festivities during the three-day meeting.

[84] Iongh, *Madama*, 156–157; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 85.

[85] Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 260–272. Ottavio participated in some of the fighting undertaken by Charles in the Empire and then accompanied him to Brussels, where he won prizes in tournaments.

Only Ottavio's brother Alessandro remained close to Margaret, while his relatives, who had expected so much from the marriage, derided her as the enemy of enemies.

For her part, Margaret regarded the Farneses, the French, and the Turks with equal contempt. Her father-in-law, Pier Luigi, abandoned plans to promote her interests along with Ottavio's and instead began to advance his own candidacy to Parma and Piacenza, technically dependencies of the papacy but also within the lands claimed by the emperor, who had promised them to Margaret and Ottavio as part of the marriage contract. Only Ottavio earned her respect by gaining a reputation for bravery in the fighting in the Netherlands. However, he was disappointed that his exploits earned him little when Charles distributed honors and awards following the Peace of Crépy with Francis I. All the Farneses equally suffered from a deliberate effort to cut their influence. Ottavio's sister Vittoria was to have married the Duke of Orleans, but the peace treaty required that she marry a Hapsburg instead. When he saw that there were no rewards in store for him, Ottavio left for Rome where he expressed his anger at the emperor and the marriage that had brought him so little profit. Like the rest of his family, Ottavio was well endowed with a sense of his own importance.[86]

In 1545, Margaret's status and fortunes changed abruptly when, after seven years of marriage, she became pregnant. Suddenly she had incredible value and even the shifty Pier Luigi began to think of advancing the child rather than himself, and thus he wanted Ottavio to have Parma and Piacenza. Alessandro, acting as papal nuncio, went to Worms to present the family's petition for the two cities to Charles. However, he had his own ambitions and instead of advancing his brother Ottavio, Alessandro advanced Pier Luigi's candidacy. Hoping to become pope after the death of his grandfather Paul III, Alessandro thought that he would benefit if his father had a strong position. Thinking that he had imperial support, he rushed home with the news. Margaret, stunned and furious, went immediately to the pope, claiming that the disappointment she and Ottavio suffered might affect her pregnancy. But the pope was unmoved and began the process of transferring the lordship to Pier Luigi, a hateful transaction that was much criticized in Rome. While the papal Consistory considered the arrangement, its meeting was disrupted by news from Germany that Charles experienced a change of heart and wished Parma and Piacenza to

[86] Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 93–98.

go to Ottavio. D'Andelot, Margaret's former advisor, personally carried the message to Rome in August 1545. The change caused a family uproar and the pope balked, approaching the cardinals personally to gain support for Pier Luigi in the Consistory. He did his job so well that the cardinals affirmed all of his proposals. Opponents could only express their loathing of the process and no one heeded the furious reactions of Margaret in Rome and her father in Germany.

On 27 August 1545 Margaret gave birth to twin boys and Loyola immediately baptized them. The pope, who had provided many gifts and sent musicians to ease her confinement, was jubilant and the emperor pleased, but the twins made no difference in his deep anger against the Farneses, including Ottavio. Margaret felt that her own place with her father should have improved, but she only gained greater status in Rome.[87] While the Farnese family continued to detest her, she held the future of the dynasty in her hands and made great efforts to control the children directly, quickly developing the character of an absolute matriarch. On 3 November 1545 the anniversary of Paul III's coronation as pope and thus a traditional festival day, Margaret and Ottavio presented the boys at the Vatican and named them Charles and Alexander. Paul III, already seventy-seven, rejoiced at the obvious display of continuity in his dynasty. Margaret sought to take immediate advantage of her new situation and requested that the governorship of the republic of Siena be given to her sons. The city already had an imperial garrison, but Charles did not want to grant such a request, perhaps because the boys were only seven months old. Thereafter, Margaret became more realistic and turned her attention to the practical affairs of Abruzzo, revealing an understanding of the place and its needs and showing an ability to govern.[88]

In 1546, Paul III felt at the height of power and the Titian painting of him with his grandsons Alessandro and Ottavio captured the grandeur and confidence of the papal court.[89] However, his hopes were thwarted by the hostility of the imperial court. Alessandro petitioned Charles to make Ottavio governor of Milan, but the emperor again disappointed the family by appointing Ferrante Gonzaga, the head of a family opposed to the Farneses, and ordering him to plot against the life of Pier Luigi.[90] The

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[87] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 26–27; Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 172–173.

[88] Iongh, *Madama*, 160–162.

[89] Titian, "Pope Paul III and his Grandsons," 1546. Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.

[90] Ferrante Gonzaga (1507–1557) served Charles loyally in Naples and Rome before taking on the post in Milan. Raised in the atmosphere of the *condottieri* in Mantua, he was fully capable of the assassination.

threat was clear, even though Pier Luigi did not seem to understand it, and he began to make statements about using Parma and Piacenza as a starting point for ruling all of Italy. He emulated the ducal courts of Florence, Ferrara, and Mantua and worked to make the government of Parma and Piacenza stronger. However, Charles had no intention of leaving him in place and ordered Gonzaga to act. Gonzaga made no secret of his plans, but Pier Luigi believed in an astrological forecast that had him living until seventy and thus took no precautions. As a result, two assassins struck him down in Piacenza on 10 September 1547. They then ran into the town crying out that they had restored liberty, but the townspeople refused to take part in the grotesque farce, for they had found Pier Luigi to be a reasonable leader. The following day, Gonzaga himself appeared at the head of Spanish troops.[91]

The assassination of her father-in-law on orders from her father created unsettling problems for Margaret in Rome, where no one knew quite what to do. Charles coolly sent an official embassy of condolence to the pope and Margaret, heightening the strained relationships while all Rome wondered why there had been no response. For the pope, who was greatly affected by the death, grief was moderated by the issue of succession in Parma and Piacenza. Ottavio was the obvious candidate for the Farneses. He went to Parma in September with a few troops and many gold coins, both of which assured him a warm reception but not necessarily imperial acceptance. Although he appeared as an elegant warrior, Ottavio also had a hard appearance, with a small head and cold eyes. He was untroubled by moral principles, deadly in his reactions, supple in getting around political obstacles, and endowed with an eye for finding advantage in any situation.[92] He tried to make a positive impression, but he became more devious and sly as he attempted to gain the approval of his grandfather and his father-in-law as successor in Parma and Piacenza. That embroiled Margaret and Ottavio in imperial and papal politics, a relationship still troubled by Pier Luigi's assassination.

From 1547 to 1549, Margaret went from one wrenching experience to another. The Farnese family blamed her for Pier Luigi's death. In the conflict, Paul III again turned to the French to strike back against the Hapsburgs. Margaret responded to threats and schemes with plots and intrigues of her own, while also taking advantage of the warmth with which the pope regarded her. She tearfully appealed to him to protect the interests

91 Iongh, *Madama*, 167–180.
92 Dumont, *Marguerite*, 100.

of her sons, his great-grandchildren, but his feelings were moderated by his fear that Charles V intended to assassinate him as well. Indeed, he was so apprehensive that Ottavio moved to the Vatican to keep guard outside his grandfather's door at night. The emperor continued to bargain, offering to guarantee papal over-lordship of Parma and Piacenza in exchange for recognition of imperial rights to Milan. To Margaret's fury the matter was not settled until 1549, and in that year she had the added grief of the death of one of the twins, Charles, in July.[93]

4. *Duchess of Parma*

In October, Ottavio tried to bring the succession question to a conclusion by making a direct appeal to the people of Parma, offending Paul III with the audacity of his move. Fearing the dangers of a hostile imperial reaction, Paul III tried to have him removed, but Ottavio was as cunning as any of his family and carefully fortified his position in Parma, and Margaret took little Alexander to the pope to remind him of his dynastic obligations. She hoped that the festivities honoring the anniversary of his papacy on November 3 would inspire reconciliation, but the sad old man refused all overtures. Ottavio, determined to succeed, even came to terms with Gonzaga, now referring to the architect of his father's death as an excellent man. His brother and wife continued to intervene with the pope, whose rapidly failing health gave urgency to the matter. Just before his death on November 9, Paul III finally confirmed Ottavio in the possession of Parma.[94] While she still lacked affirmation from the imperial court, Margaret immediately left for Parma with a personal vow to abandon anger and melancholy in favor of gladness and happiness. She had lost a son and even grieved for the pope who had helped and honored her for twelve years. However, that was now in the past and she looked forward to being a duchess and to the thanks of her husband, who actually owed his advancement to her intervention. The continued occupation of Piacenza's citadel by Spanish troops seemed to be the only remaining problem. Margaret planned for a glorious time in Parma, even plundering the art work and furniture of the Medici palace in Rome for her use in an as yet unbuilt ducal palace of her own. Her act was poor thanks for the friendship of the Medici, but clearly showed her determination to enjoy

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93 Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 179–186.

94 D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 33–36; Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 120.

her new status. Margaret surrendered her governing role in Abruzzo, establishing councils in an attempt to have good governance and justice continue.[95]

The conclave of cardinals approved Ottavio as Duke of Parma, but could not agree on the elevation of Cardinal Alessandro to the papacy. The debate continued for weeks and Alessandro asked Margaret to come to Rome to help with the negotiations and intrigues. While she was active in Rome trying to thwart the pro-France cardinals and advance the Farnese contingent, she was unhappy about leaving her four-year-old son. The cardinals deadlocked for three months and finally selected a compromise candidate, Julius III. As compensation, the Farneses were confirmed in important church posts as well as in Parma, which was a defeat for the imperial faction. The course of the Council of Trent and the relations of France with Italy were at stake.[96] There were actually tense moments over the succession in Parma, but Margaret finally made her formal entry as duchess on 2 July 1550 after a triumphal procession from Bologna. Ottavio joined her at Reggio, and all along the route they received a carefully arranged warm welcome, climaxing with elaborate festivities, rich with the symbols of power and status, in Parma. The bishop greeted her at the Porta San Michele and a solemn service began a celebration that lasted a week. Margaret was honored in a procession that traversed the city, stopping at all of the churches that had been specially decorated and passing through two triumphal arches that had been constructed for the event. The entire community was represented in groups or by symbols displayed on the streets.[97] The Bishop turned his own palace over to the couple to serve as their official residence until they could construct one of their own. On July 10, Margaret, fully established in her own duchy, wrote a letter of thanks to her father expressing her gratitude for at last having a title and principality. Margaret was also reconciled to her marriage and exceptionally pleased with her son. There were problems arising from Ottavio's inattention to affairs and his general lack of ability in governance. Margaret had to assume control of the financial situation and cooperated with Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and Ottavio's chief advisor, Paolo Vitelli. The continued presence of imperial troops and the general

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95 Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 190.

96 D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 37–40; Romano, *Pasquino*, 28–29 for a satiric view of the conclave. Julius III called the second session of the Council of Trent in 1551.

97 Giuseppe Bertini, "L'ingresso di Marguerita a Parma nel 1550: La corte e la citta," in S. Mantini, *Margerite d'Austria*, 85–106.

scarcity of food because of disruption in the countryside added difficulties, but Margaret was fully capable of managing the problems.[98] She had a sense of dignity and of prudence, and was determined to give life to the Farnese court. It was now time for her to begin to live.[99]

A portrait painted in Parma when she was twenty-eight shows some of the contradictions in her character at that moment. She was attired and bejeweled in a most feminine manner, but wore a chain similar to that of the Order of the Golden Fleece whose knights were the great lords of the Netherlands.[100] Margaret engaged in wishful thinking about her place in the world of the great and powerful. Her promotion was the result of her father and the pope, aided by the murderous efforts of Gonzaga. Her birth erected permanent barriers to her acceptance despite her new position. In addition, there were great dangers inherent in Italian politics. Gonzaga felt that he had been cheated; he had managed Pier Luigi's assassination but Ottavio had reaped the reward. He began to mutter about another assassination, and the emperor, who knew all about his insinuations, only asked him to hold off as long as Ottavio showed himself loyal to the imperial cause. Margaret made every effort to keep everyone true to an anti-French policy, but her father's shifting policies and Ottavio's impatience and imprudence made her task difficult.

Feeling trapped between imperial and French policies, Ottavio sought his own advantage and associated himself with French interests, thus creating a dangerous breach with the imperial court.[101] Charles responded with typical anger, which worsened Margaret's lot in emotional and practical terms because he cut off her revenue and made it clear that Ottavio's activities had placed her beyond the pale. She wrote a sad, even beseeching letter to Charles, trying to reestablish relations.[102] His response was to say that she could regain his confidence and all of her funds only by withdrawing, leaving her husband and residing in one of Charles's lands. The bitter answer was ironic given her fervent opposition to the marriage

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[98] Ibid., 95–98.

[99] Lefevre, *"Madama"* 195–196; Iongh, *Madama*, 187–190.

[100] The 1550 portrait is attributed to Gatti and is in the Congregazione di S. Filippo Neri, Parma.

[101] Lefevre, *"Madama"* 198, Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 460. Charles openly discussed removing Ottavio by force and encouraged the pope to assist by excommunicating him.

[102] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 41–49; Iongh, *Madama*, 192; Gachard, *Voyages . . . Journal*, 2: 438. Worried about her health, Charles dispatched D'Andelot to visit her in Parma. He coldly referred to her as the Duchess of Castro to emphasize his determination to remove Ottavio from Parma.

and his insistence that she accept it. Margaret had no desire to abandon her new duchy, an act that would betray her son's future. Thus the offer of flight, which would have been so attractive a few years before, was unthinkable even as Ottavio earned the enmity of the pope as well as the emperor when he signed a treaty with France in May 1551. The pope excommunicated him and stripped him of all his titles. In response, Margaret put her political and diplomatic experience to work. Acquiring Parma had heightened her tendencies to dominate and to be possessive, and the renewal of hostilities caused bitterness and rancor to take up residence with her in the Bishop's Palace in Parma. Urged on by her father, the Duke of Gonzaga besieged Parma and a small but cruel war lasted until 1552. Margaret acted well, remaining in the city and asking Francesco Marchi, who had served her since her Florentine days, to remodel the city's fortifications. He readily made them impervious to the mercenaries and weapons of Gonzaga, but the duke spread misery in the surrounding villages. However, Margaret's presence forced Gonzaga to allow supplies into Parma. The emperor was displeased with the political position of his daughter, but he had no intention of allowing her to die at the hands of one of his minions.[103]

The siege halted abruptly when a French army invaded Italy, forcing Charles to face issues far greater than the possession of Parma. While his army checked French advances, he failed to defeat the German Protestants, and religious troubles also reemerged in the Netherlands. Charles restored Parma to Ottavio but refused to grant him Piacenza and he also kept all of Margaret's money. Desperate financial straits drew Ottavio into another agreement with France, but when money failed to materialize, Margaret used the opportunity to seek reconciliation with Charles. Ottavio's support of imperial interests in Italy became more important when, following the death of Julius III, Paul IV, a dedicated enemy of the Hapsburgs, became pope. No sooner had the reconciliation been accomplished than Charles once again turned Margaret's world upside down by deciding to retire. He had already drawn his son Philip into an active role, making him regent in Spain, bringing him into the affairs of the Netherlands, and arranging his marriage to Mary Tudor, a union that could have had enormous consequences. The change placed Margaret under the protection of her half-brother Philip, although her father secured her

[103] Leneppe, *Les Années italiennes*, 124; Lefevre, *"Madama"* 203; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 107–111; S. Mantini, "Ceremonie, Ingressi e Funerali," in Mantini, *Margherite d'Austria*, 155.

Italian position by restoring her funds and offering Piacenza and Novarra to Ottavio. He bade her farewell in a letter from Ghent, where he had withdrawn to orchestrate the transfer of power to Philip and his own brother Ferdinand. He remained quite distant despite the warmth of the letter, having her remain in Parma while calling Ottavio to Ghent. He wanted Ottavio to agree to specific conditions, including the presence of Spanish troops in the Piacenza citadel and the surrender of little Alexander to the Spanish court. Deeply suspicious of Ottavio, Charles wanted to ensure his good behavior by making his son a hostage, but he made the command sweet by promising that Philip would raise Alexander with his own son Don Carlos and would arrange an advantageous marriage for him. He gave no consideration to Margaret's feeling at the loss of her son, merely ordering her to bring Alexander to Brussels to be presented to Philip. Nor did he agree to stay to meet with her again.

The new situation caused Margaret to contemplate her own position as she prepared for the journey north. Possession of her duchy was finally in order, but on reflection it was not all that she had hoped it would be. The provincial town of Parma was so different from the exciting world of Rome where she had enjoyed exceptional status as the *prima donna*. No diplomats sought her out and no great events drew people to her salon. The memory of past power and pleasure tormented her, a feeling that her father's resignation made worse for it reduced her to the status of Ottavio's spouse. She remained remote from Ottavio, although she wrote a warm letter to him following his brother's death in battle against her father. Her real consolation and interest had been in Alexander, and the new agreement made him disappear from her life. Philip was to be her guarantor, but his life was dominated by suspicions, and the Farnese family was so easy to doubt! However, in September 1556, Philip and Ottavio signed the pact at Ghent that rehabilitated Ottavio and made him a vassal of Spain. He suffered a deluge of contemptuous curses from the French court, but that was all part of the drama of the Farnese family's entry into the highest levels of European political life. Margaret shared in the credit since her perseverance and dedication to the Hapsburg cause had brought them to that point. The drawback was that Margaret and her family became prisoners of Spanish policy. She viewed the loss of her son in light of her own experience; the ten-year-old boy had to begin his duties to the Hapsburg house just as she had at the age of eight. Her devotion to family was clear, as was her acceptance of the aloof and distant nature of her father. Charles had sent her the final details in his last letter from

Ghent, knowing that she would do her duty even though he did not wait to see her.

Thus in November 1556, Margaret began a return journey to the provinces that she had left twenty-six years before. She was to meet her half-brother for the first time and surrender her child to him. The prospects were troubling, but it was still an inviting, exciting moment. Margaret did not know that the provinces she was so pleased to see again teetered on the brink of grim conflict and confusion. Without the least concern except for money, she set off on a journey that she wanted to be a grand display of Hapsburg status. Her entourage included one hundred and sixty nine people and her ways were expensive, and thus the group ran out of money by the time it had reached Milan and Margaret was forced to badger Ottavio for more. She even wrote to Philip and to her farther for funds, wanting to return to the Netherlands with all possible pomp and grandeur, traveling in a style suitable to the might of Philip and the memory of her father's power. For Margaret, it had to be a triumphal march, displaying for the entire world the majesty of the family. Heavy snows and harsh conditions of the worst winter in memory limited the display, but she continued undaunted and finally reached Brussels in February 1557, where the formal ceremonies and appearances were now of a more delicate character.

CHAPTER TWO

RETURN TO THE NETHERLANDS

1. *Meeting Philip II*

In November 1556, twenty-four years after leaving the Netherlands, Margaret returned filled with fond, if vague, memories and proud of the status and title that added grandeur to her entry. At 36, she was not a beauty, but had cultivated a refined, elegant appearance enhanced by her positive temperament and intelligence. Margaret presented herself to a festive court in Brussels and all of the anxiety she must have felt about encountering a half-brother for the first time, and surrendering her only son to him, abated in the warmth of her reception. She resembled her father, which pleased her brother and delighted the people of Brussels. Philip was as friendly as his detached and aloof nature would allow, drawing her into a round of winter frolics that had the court sledding and skating on frozen ponds during the day and returning to enjoy masked balls on the ice at night. Two years earlier, Philip had started the festivities on his return from the restrained, reserved English court of his new wife, Mary I.[1] The hospitality of the great aristocrats was matched by his own delight in offering entertainments, for at that time he was still on good terms with the leaders of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The Coudenburg Palace glowed with the festive atmosphere, and Ludovico Guicciardini wrote of its fabulous features, including a great library and an abundance of art. There, fourteen hundred Spaniards, Italians, and a small group of invited Netherlanders enjoyed the splendid rooms and fine collection of paintings, the legacy of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary.[2]

The Spanish were already distancing themselves from the Netherlanders, avoiding mixing with them and setting themselves apart through extravagant displays of religiosity and different, quite awful, table manners. Beyond the precincts of the court, the Spanish attracted disfavor for their indifference to the Netherlands, but that went unnoticed as brother

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[1] Carolly Erickson. *Bloody Mary* (New York: 1978), 431–433.

[2] G. Dumont, *Marguerite de Parme: Bâtarde de Charles Quint* (Brussels: 1999), 128–129.

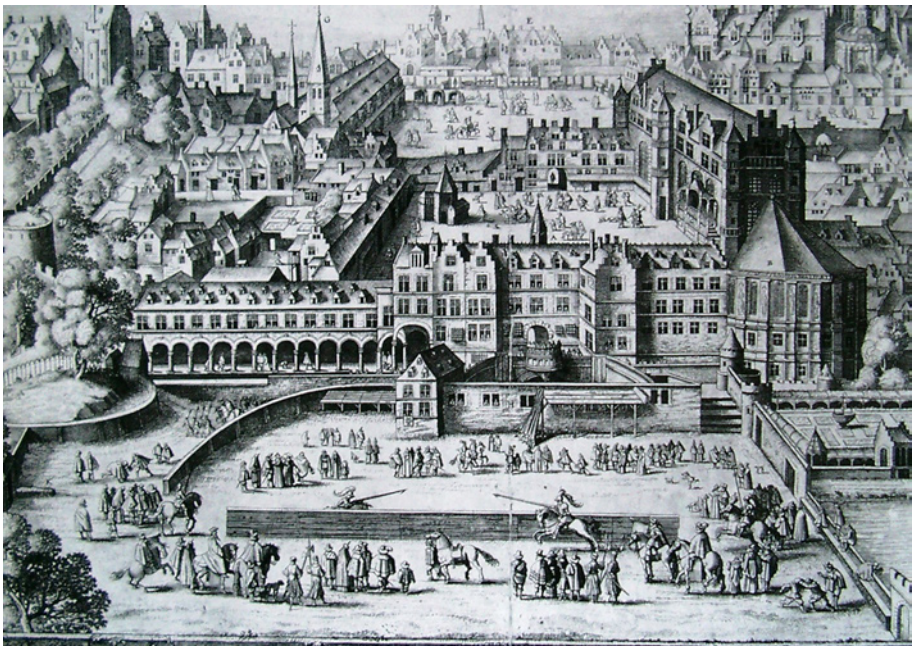

Fig. 1. Coudenberg Palace, Brussels. British Museum.

and sister exchanged warm compliments at the palace.[3] Margaret enjoyed the weeks that followed as she made a place for herself at the side of a brother whose attention extended to her son as well. She did not realize that Philip was also considering her as a possible regent for him in the Netherlands. While she was not the primary candidate, selecting Margaret would have continued the tradition established by Charles V of having a close family member occupy the office. However, the issue was far from decided and Emanuel-Philibert, exiled from his native Savoy by the French, continued in that office. No one at that time took the Duchess of Parma seriously, and there was a faint echo of the contempt for the "little bastard" at court that had marred her early childhood. Nevertheless, she delighted in attending elegant dinners and gatherings in which Philip's lighthearted pursuit of Margaret's niece Christine of Lorraine set the tone. Everyone engaged in a brisk competition to catch Philip's attention and Margaret, while basking in the warmth of family relationships,

[3] J. Iongh, *Madama Margaretha van Oostenrijk, Hertogen van Parma en Piacenza*, (Amsterdam: 1975), 210.

had to have noted the rapt attention her brother gave to Christine. Margaret's niece Christine had been thrust into the marriage market at the same time as Margaret when Charles V sent her off to marry the Duke of Milan. On his death, she married the Duke of Lorraine who died in 1545, once again making the lovely and young Christine a widow who was then driven out of Lorraine by the French. After she took refuge in Brussels, Philip became quite smitten with her, which made the parties more intriguing. In all, it was a grand period for Margaret as she imitated the great at court in spending on clothing and portraits. She also joined Christine in giving entertainments that were so lavish that Ottavio began to grumble about the cost. Only the prospect of returning to Parma without Alexander dimmed her happiness.

The Italians in her company thoroughly enjoyed the visit and left an enthusiastic record. The astute Ludovico Guicciardini made an effort to describe all of the major characteristics of the provinces. He expressed high praise over the numerous cities and towns that were connected by roads and canals dotted with prosperous villages. To the trained eye of an Italian accustomed to vigorous urban life, the Netherlands had all of the hallmarks of a civilized land.[4] Others in her suite spoke only of the court, which was still enjoying the festivities honoring the end of Charles V's reign and the beginning of Philip II's. The Venetian ambassador Suriano wrote that Philip was gradually moderating his pleasure seeking and adopting a far more serious tone as he turned to administering his lands. By the end of 1556, affairs were beginning to go badly with France and the papacy, and Philip had to deal directly with the complexities of political life in the Netherlands. However, most in Margaret's entourage noticed nothing as they joined in the revels that were to end in April 1557 when they were scheduled to return to Italy. Philip delayed their departure by asking Margaret, at the express wish of his wife Mary, to join a large group from court in a visit to England. He was not keen on rejoining his wife, but his policies required English financial and military cooperation against France and the papacy. Thus he ended years of avoiding Mary and, driven by political need rather than love, sailed from Calais on March 18 to meet the queen at Greenwich the next day. Margaret regarded the invitation as a mark of new respect and accompanied by Alexander, she followed Philip two weeks later.

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[4] Ludovico Guicciardini, *Discrittioni . . . di tutti I Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germaniae Inferiori* (Antwerp: 1581).

The Venetian ambassadors in attendance filled their reports with praise of Mary and the fine reception she accorded to everyone from the Netherlands.[5] However, they also noticed how Mary's health had declined. She did her best to inspire a joyful atmosphere, and the round of festivities continued with the only unsettling note arising from the religious difficulties that radiated from the English court. Cardinal Reginald Pole, Mary's close advisor, rebuked Margaret for allowing Alexander to be instructed in Latin through Caesar rather than the study of sacred texts. She knew him from his years in Rome and was quick to reply that moral treatises required a capacity for personal reflection that a child did not have. The issue gave her a lesson in the spirit of religious zealotry that would later take up residence in the Netherlands.[6] Queen Mary acted as a gracious hostess, supervising galas at Westminster and Greenwich and making Margaret feel welcome. The queen's real difficulty was in trying to accommodate Philip's desire to be with Christine at banquets, and she ended up having to share him, diminishing her desire to act as his wife. At a banquet presented at Whitehall, a quarrel broke out between Christine and Mary that became known to others in the party. The contentious atmosphere only eased when Christine withdrew with Margaret when she left for Brussels after Easter 1557. Philip stayed until June 20 and Mary rewarded him by persuading Parliament to furnish men and money for the war against France.[7]

On her return to Brussels, Margaret continued to meet those who were to be associated with Philip's government, including William of Orange and Antoine Perrenot, the future cardinal Granvelle, who had arranged her first marriage to Alessandro de' Medici but with whom she had only corresponded. She had to settle affairs for her son, since Alexander was to leave the Netherlands for Spain to join the household of Don Carlos. Some of the attitude of disdain for the illegitimate daughter of a former ruler continued at the Brussels court, but Margaret remained in the midst of a general festive atmosphere. She was forced to put on a brave face to ease the separation from her son. On 20 May 1557, Margaret slipped away from Brussels, afraid to have a final meeting with Alexander. A long, sad trip back to Parma followed and there she began a life of banal routine. Conditions were uncertain because Spanish troops continued to occupy the

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[5] L.P. Gachard, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénetiens sur Charles Quint et Philippe II*, 2:29, Alberti, *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato* (Florence: 1839–1841) volume 6.

[6] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 130–132.

[7] Erickson, *Bloody Mary*, 463–465.

citadel at Piacenza and Pope Paul IV increased his anti-Hapsburg activities. The Duke of Alva stationed a Spanish army in the south of Italy and had even threatened Rome. Papal policy had to become more moderate after the French suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of Hapsburg forces at Saint-Quentin in 1557. Margaret had followed the struggle closely and Ottavio had joined Philip's forces in the Netherlands. She had sold some of her jewels to help with the costs of the war in Italy, and she even took part in negotiating an end to that part of the conflict.[8]

Margaret also began to involve herself in marriage prospects for Alexander. She and Ottavio had dreams of establishing the Farnese family as a permanent power in Italy. To further this scheme, an ideal marriage would be between Alexander and the daughter of Cosimo de' Medici. However, Philip shared no part in the desire to further Farnese interests and his indifference to her plans did not benefit Margaret as she tried to make something of her position in Parma. Then she was distressed when the unhappy news of her father's death in Valladolid reached her in Parma at the end of September 1558. Much of her prestige vanished with his death, and she felt isolated and threatened. Charles V had offered protection from afar because he was directly involved in Italy, but Philip was as yet an unknown quality, so her life yet again entered a dangerous period. Thomas Machiavelli, a member of her court, reported that the death threw her into illness and confusion.[9] However, her grief was sincere, and in the elaborate ceremonies she ordered to be performed in Piacenza, she continued to show herself as the loyal, adoring daughter to the father she hardly knew.[10] Ottavio and Alexander attended even more elaborate ceremonies in Brussels, where a representation of a ship of state without a captain was carried in a parade attended by great crowds. Charles V had difficulties with his Netherlands subjects, but they still regarded him as one of their own.[11]

The great contrast between the late emperor and his son became more apparent at that moment. In the common opinion, Philip II was seen as a person who did not even drink well, for his sudden adoption of temperance was incomprehensible to them. He was autocratic, confident, assertive, opinionated, and fervent in his dedication to Spanish Catholicism.

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[8] Iongh, *Madama*, 216.

[9] R. Lefevre, *"Madama." Margarita d'Austria (1522–1586)* (Rome: 1986), 210.

[10] Ibid., 220; and S.A. Van Leneppe, *Les années italiennes de Marguerite de Parme* (Geneva: n.d.), 126.

[11] Gachard, *Relations des ambassadeurs*, 2: 40.

Unimpressed by the qualities of life in the Netherlands, he wished for the provinces to assume their proper role as part of his massive empire with its monumental challenges. While not indifferent to the provinces, Philip was nonetheless keen on managing, not enjoying them. For the Netherlands, Charles V's succession plan was flawed from its inception and created a bitter legacy. On his first visit in 1549, Philip had sworn to abide by the Joyous Entry, the fundamental statement of provincial rights and privileges, but he gave little thought to that when he returned in 1556.[12] His attitude ignored the profound attachment of the provinces to their privileges that Jacques de Wesenbeke, a magistrate of Antwerp, affirmed.

> The same lands resisted whenever anyone wished to take away . . . their ancient liberty and freedom, for which the inhabitants in all times have been not only enthusiasts . . . but also exceptional and very ardent zealots, observers and protectors . . . and it has been seen a thousand times over how much they have been taken to heart, and with what determination the lands have challenged any contradiction of the least liberty, custom and privilege, and with what expense, diligence and firmness they have always maintained and defended them.[13]

In disregarding these feelings, Philip's relations with his new subjects departed from those of his father. In addition to taking a positive part in governance, Charles had depended on the cities to fund, with loans and taxes, the expensive Hapsburg-Valois wars. The emperor had developed a solid relationship with them and with the provincial estates, which assisted his efforts with short-term taxes. In contrast, Philip acknowledged the provinces only as a source of revenue, regarding their political institutions and judicial traditions as troublesome and inappropriate to his political vision. He was restless in the face of medieval institutions and found the desire to make the church and government more efficient irresistible.

Thus, in public life royal attitudes collided with provincial practices. When he appeared in the company of his father, Philip had made a good impression. When he traveled alone, the situation changed dramatically. For almost two years he journeyed through the provinces, repeatedly revealing his lack of sympathy with the habits and mores he encountered. He formed a poor impression of his northern subjects, and theirs of him was equally dismal. Greater familiarity did not make the king any less aloof or alter his suspicions. Actually, his long visit had an unusually

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[12] Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain* (New Haven: 1997), 40–78; and Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven: 1998), 115–120.

[13] J. De Wesenbeke, *Mémoires* (Brussels: 1859), 59.

adverse effect because the king's personality became a major factor in public life.[14] Philip wished to be unchallenged in rule and religion alike, and every encounter seemed to breed confrontation. The situation was part of a broad conflict in Western Europe that pitted new aspirations of monarchy against the long treasured powers and prerogatives of provinces. Provinces in the Netherlands had gained a striking level of independence and their leaders were loath to surrender the least privilege. Consequently, the existing governing traditions represented everything that Spanish absolutism opposed. Past forms assumed a sacred character and members of provincial institutions demanded the right to debate and deliberate over all proposals that intruded into traditional public life. Philip II sought to establish a clear chain of command that required uncritical, unconditional obedience. He wished to delegate authority to new institutions in the Netherlands and he expected that they would carry out orders from court without any delay. Philip was particularly anxious for prompt compliance with demands for increased revenue and for determined action against heresy. In contrast, the provincial leaders advanced ideals of debate in public affairs and parochialism as a political model. Deliberation had to accompany all suggestions of change, and the preservation of liberties was a permanent objective even when it came at the expense of unity and the public good.[15] As a result, the king and leading aristocrats offered unwelcome advice to each other; politically confident cities refused to become docile; and the troubled church did not rush to implement reform measures.

Indeed, the Netherlands adhered to values far removed from those of the king in judicial, commercial, and intellectual matters. Worse, Philip's views on proper governance alienated all of the powerful forces in the provinces, leaving his new subjects wary if not openly hostile.[16] In a more ominous development, religious life entered a period of disorder as a second phase of Calvinist proselytizing enjoyed success. The presence of determined reformers gave his desire to remake the church greater urgency. Philip detested heresy, regarding it as a disease, and he had a particular dislike for Calvinism. The message of the new reformers had

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[14] Kamen, *Philip of Spain*, 50.

[15] Wim Blockmans, *Alternatives to Monarchical Centralization: The Great Traditions of Revolt in Flanders and Brabant* in H.G. Koenigsberger ed., *Republics and Republicanism in Early Modern Europe* (Munich: 1989), 145–154.

[16] *Collection des voyages des souverains des Pays-Bas*, L.P. Gachard, ed., (Brussels: 1874–1882), vol. 1.

political content since its preachers and teachers sought to transform the whole of life. The popularity of reformation movements nurtured his disdain. Philip wanted to combat heresy with a renewed Catholic church, hence he was enthusiastic about implementing the wholesale reform of the dioceses that Charles V had proposed decades before. The huge old dioceses were to be broken up and divided into smaller entities to serve the needs of both the church and the crown.[17] The change was drastic and called for the rearrangement of benefices as well as boundaries, imposing church order and the possibility of inquisitions in areas that previously had been free of ecclesiastical control. The new bishoprics inspired deep opposition, and Charles V had never been able to initiate the change. Philip II wanted to revive the plan and impose it immediately to curb the spread of reformation. However, opposition remained strong among ecclesiastics, which put him at odds with the church even while he protected it from the attacks of the reformers.

Eager to reinforce his regime, Philip discounted opposition as unjustified interference. In his pronouncements, royal wishes came dangerously close to commands. Despite the many beneficial parts of the restructuring, provincial leaders also saw how the plan favored the king, and they were vocal in opposing the prospect of tyranny. The existing episcopal hierarchy, and the people who benefitted from it, refused to submit to reform or even to admit the need for it. Privileges made church opposition powerful, but the dispute inspired attacks that included a barrage of plays, tracts, posters, and sermons mocking its failings.[18] The connection between urban drama in the Chambers of Rhetoric and the demands for reform of the church had a long history despite the efforts of the Brussels court to suppress criticism of Catholic traditions. The state of the church made it an inviting target despite the dangers of being charged with heresy. The Antwerp playwright Frans Fraet was executed in 1558 for a play that sharply criticized persecution and the behavior of churchmen.[19] Philip II clearly wanted inquisitors to monitor all cities for such activity

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[17] M.L. Deirickx, *Documents inédits sur l'érection des nouveaux diocèses aux Pays-Bas (1521–1570).* 3 vols. (Brussels: 1967).

[18] See the works of Gary K. Waite, *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556*, (Toronto: 2000); his "Rhetoricians and Religious Compromise During the Early Reformation ©. 1520–1555", in Strietman and Happé eds., *Urban Theater in the Low Countries, 1400–1625* (Turnhout: 2006) 79–102; and "Reformers on Stage: Rhetorician Drama and Reformation Propaganda in the Netherlands of Charles V, 1519–1556," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 83 (1992) 209–238.

[19] Waite, "Reformers on Stage," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte*, 83: 232.

as part of his reorganization of the dioceses. The king's irritation over the slowness of reform became fury when Calvinist popularity underscored the need for prompt action. Indeed, Calvinism would have been the most notable challenge to public order had it not been for the political troubles instigated by Philip II himself.

The king had merged political and religious opposition by trying to impose an inquisition in each new bishopric, which the provinces regarded as contrary to their privileges and judicial standards. He sharpened debate over church courts by demanding strict compliance with the placards, firmly believing in the efficacy of extirpating heresy by fire, cord, sword, and water. Philip had no need for new or inventive prohibitions of heresy, for the placards represented all the brutal methods of the century. However, legal procedures instantly became an issue. Charles V had issued the harsh, dreadful placards, but he had often allowed moderation of their fierce penalties and had enforced them through the existing judicial apparatus. Overall, the placards granted significant authority to secular and church courts.[20] The prospect of a horrifying death did little to check the fervor with which people greeted the message of the reformed church. The magistrates of the cities did not convert in huge numbers but they acknowledged the popularity of reform and approached its presence with an Erasmian tolerance, allowing a remarkable freedom of expression. Subsequently they would be sorely tried by the fanaticism of Calvinism and Spanish Catholicism, both of which repudiated toleration.[21]

Opposition infuriated Philip. From the beginning the king could not have understood his new subjects less. Philip II showed little appreciation for the culture of the Netherlands. He reserved his admiration for the painters who produced portraits and religious scenes; the rest he ignored or regarded with suspicion. Calculating and obsessed with his self-appointed task of saving Christendom from the scourge of Protestantism, Philip regarded the land only as an outpost in a struggle to exterminate heretics. His schemes required continued military expenditure, and he expected the provinces to bear a good portion of the cost. Not subtle in the least, he made it clear that demands for money had to be met, not debated, and that local concerns and practices henceforth had to be subordinate to those of the crown. Directives in governance would

[20] A. Loin, ed., "Documents concernants les placards, l'inquisition et les troubles religieux aux Pay-Bas," *BCRH* 8: 23–48.

[21] Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands* (London: 1966), 34–66.

originate in Spain. His attitude, unequivocally expressed during his tour, won friends only among those chosen to carry out royal wishes, and even they became uneasy as the actual organization of power emerged. Local officials and aristocrats had to obey orders, a demand that antagonized virtually every public figure. In particular, the members of the Order of the Golden Fleece, vital members of the administration, abhorred becoming functionaries carrying out the orders of an absentee king.[22] The members of the Order, one established by the Burgundians in the fifteenth century, were unrivaled in their influence in the provinces as stadtholders, or governors, and were accustomed to participating in the decisions of the Brussels court.

2. *Choosing Margaret as Regent*

The contrast between the Golden Fleece and Philip II quickly affected public affairs. During 1557 and 1558, Philip attempted to reorder the government of the provinces, introducing his plans for political and religious life. Obsessed with a concept of his duty to God and the obligation of his subjects to assist him, he dismissed out of hand all who failed to share his passions. It was the misfortune of the leaders in the provinces to have equally strong beliefs that were quite opposite to those of the king. These differences became a crisis after the Peace of Câteau-Cambrésis ended the last Hapsburg-Valois war. The peace treaty also restored the incumbent regent of the Netherlands, Emmanuel-Philibert of Savoy, to his lands and he resigned, allowing the new Lord of the Netherlands to remake the Brussels court. Charles V had spent time and energy in the provinces, but Philip saw them as a small piece of his empire. His new regent had to reflect that view and share his autocratic vision. He searched for a regent and governor who would accede to the interests of the crown, making loyalty more important than ability and discounting traditional bonds between the offices and the provinces. Moreover, the king decreed that a Privy Council rather than the regent would be the center of authority in Brussels. The decision that the regime would no longer have an aristocratic flavor became a central issue. He appointed Antoine Perrenot, soon to be Cardinal Granvelle, as head of the Privy Council. His prestige and titles came to him by virtue of service to the crown and he was thus a

[22] P.C. Hooft, *Nederlandse historien in het Kort* (Brussels/Amsterdam: 1978), 1–12.

member of the growing aristocracy of the robe, which automatically made him an object of contempt among the aristocracy of birth. However, Since Granvelle returned their disdain in kind, Philip made a clear statement when had him assist in selecting a regent.

Philip had automatically rejected those who advanced their own candidacy. William, Prince of Orange, leader of the Order of the Golden Fleece and acknowledged head of the aristocracy, viewed himself as the obvious candidate, which rendered him unacceptable to the king. A potentate by his own right, he had too much power to be compatible with Philip II.[23] Likewise the candidacy of Lamoral d'Egmont, Prince of Gavres, suffered from greatness. Christine of Lorraine, whose distinguished, genteel life exemplified courtly manners, had more qualities that Philip found agreeable. However, she enjoyed too much popularity with the general aristocracy and lacked the political experience valued by Philip II and Granvelle. The king's personal attraction for her did not sway him in the cold business of politics. Had the aristocracy united in support of a single candidate, then Philip would have had more difficulty imposing his choice, but the keen jealousy with which they followed one another's fortunes made it impossible for one to advance beyond the others. When Granvelle succeeded in excluding Orange and Egmont, they in turn demanded that Christine of Lorraine leave the competition. The aristocrats wanted a regime to their liking and felt that their services in the wars earned them special place, but vanity and self-seeking behavior destroyed what chances they had before a determined king.

If Philip II and Granvelle had realized their own wishes, Mary of Hungary would have resumed the task of regent.[24] Mary begged Philip to be excused because of her age, but he persevered and only her death ended the issue. Margaret of Parma's candidacy became more prominent in the midst of rancorous debate following the death of Mary of Hungary. As a compromise candidate, all local forces regarded her as unsuitable. That seemed to be a positive sign for Granvelle, who did not disapprove, and Philip felt that he would have greater control over a member of his own family, especially since he had Margaret's husband Ottavio and her son Alexander under his control. Charles V had previously suggested her

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[23] A.T. van Deursen, *Willem van Oranje: een biografish portret* (Amsterdam: 1995); C.V. Wedgwood, *William the Silent* (London: 1944) 22–25; F. Rachfahl, *Wilhelm von Oranien und der Niederländische Aufstand*, 3 vols. (Halle: 1906–1924), vol. 1; *Correspondance de la Maison d'Orange.* 6 vols., L.P. Gachard ed. (Brussels: 1847–1866), vols. 1 and 2.

[24] Iongh, *Madama*, 228–234.

candidacy because she would be well received and yet neutral. Firmly grounded in political life and with traditional, unenthusiastic religious opinions, she was the completely orthodox candidate. Philip knew that she had no basis for support among the aristocracy and hoped that she would act as a quiet partner in his enterprises. Her birth kept her from close alliances with the great aristocrats, whose callous and ungenerous environment tolerated the natural daughter of an emperor, but never included her as a serious member of the princely class. Margaret's lack of strength, her proven obedience, and her dedication to the Hapsburgs made her candidacy attractive, and she was eager for a change in her life. Had she been aware of Philip's attitude toward her and of his obdurate nature, Margaret might have declined the offer.[25]

After considerable hesitation, Philip appointed Margaret as regent and governess, once again disappointing Ottavio, who had wanted to be considered himself. Instead, he had to accept for Margaret in Brussels in March 1559. She ratified his decision with all possible speed, welcoming yet another astonishing turn in her life. The move would take her from the duchy that had begun to bore her, and had the added advantage of removing her from Ottavio, who was to return to Parma. Shedding her husband was anything but an issue for her. His activities had always had a duplicitous and grasping nature that had caused so many difficulties as she tried to secure Parma from her father. There was also her more general indifference to men which made her quite content at the prospect of separation. Living with him in Parma had made her realize how little she liked being nothing more than Ottavio's wife. She had surrendered a position with diplomatic importance in Rome to take on the modest affairs of Parma and Ottavio ignored her views and advice.[26]

The idea of establishing a court in Brussels was infinitely attractive. Margaret had never been taken seriously in those of her great-aunt and aunt, and now she would occupy the leading place. The glittering prospect of being regent made her hasten to gather advisors and secretaries to accompany and assist her. In the final week of June 1559 she again journeyed north filled with pleasant anticipation and thoroughly enjoying the enlarged military cavalcade required by her new position. She rejoiced in the decision that brought her back to the Netherlands for what appeared to be an important appointment. Alas, even at that early moment Philip

[25] Levevre, *"Madama"*, 217.
[26] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 136–137; and Iongh, *Madama*, 196–197.

was showing his indifference toward her and the provinces by failing to prepare the formal documents transferring authority that customarily greeted a new regent on arrival. Nor was the trip without its perils; from Basle, Margaret humorously recounted to Ottavio dangers posed by men and nature that had nearly made him a widower.[27] She then sailed down the Rhine, eager to see her son and to undertake her new duties. Philip was also anxious for her arrival since establishing the regency was his last duty before departing for Spain. He even moved his court to Ghent so as to be near his fleet moored at Vlissingen in Zeeland. It was a particularly trying time for the king who had to convoke the Estates General, a dreadful prospect for a ruler devoted to absolutist principles, but it was necessary to confirm the transfer of the Lordship of the Netherlands and to present Margaret as the new regent. The Estates General only included representatives of the church, the aristocracy, and the cities of nine of the seventeen provinces, but it influenced public affairs and issues of taxation in all of them. Philip tried to put the convocation to good use by asking the deputies for soldiers and revenue, but they greeted the demands coldly and showed little inclination to conform. Unable to command compliance, Philip was furious but helpless as a stalemate emerged in all issues of finance and authority.

Margaret met Philip on July 28 just outside Ghent in a brilliant show. The court followed the exacting protocol of Burgundian tradition, and the great lords who would play out their parts in the drama that life in the Netherlands was to become were there. She appeared dressed elegantly in dark clothing in the midst of the lavish display of color and finery that was the hallmark of the Order of the Golden Fleece. All were arrayed by rank and office on the flat fields of Flanders: Philip and his diplomatic corps; Alexander and Ottavio; Granvelle; and the great lords Orange, Egmont, Aerschot, Berghes, Mansfeld, Glanjon, and Berlaymont. Each of the lords was determined to be the closest advisor to Margaret, but to the side were two others with an equal passion for giving advice, Thomás Armenteros, who was part of Granvelle's staff, and Viglius van Aytta, a leading jurist and member of the Privy Council. Further off but equally impressive stood the assembled representatives of the provinces at the Estates General, there to greet the new regent and to bid the king farewell. While Margaret had met most of the court members during her previous visit, the less privileged commoners, the representatives of the cities, were unknown

[27] Iongh, *Madama*, 224–225.

to her and she made an effort to draw closer to them, knowing how she would need their assistance in the tasks before her.[28]

For a week there were meetings and ceremonies involving the court and the members of the Estates. Some of the strains were beginning to appear as Philip continued to distance himself from the members of the Fleece, whom he regarded as wastrels but whose positions were vital to the government. He disliked them and they disdained Margaret, disparaging her appointment with posturing and feigned indignation over her birth. In the face of loss of power, they found her to be a convenient focus for their anger. Orange and Egmont postured the most, for these two friends had been close to Charles V. Egmont felt keenly that he deserved a high position near the king, whose father had favored him as a soldier and a diplomat. Orange, with vast power and prestige from his own resources, was more restrained as he tried to establish a dynasty independent of Philip. Neither understood that Philip only wanted obedient subordinates who shared his religious fervor. Orange and Egmont had little concern for religion and could not even consider becoming mere ciphers under the rule of a Spanish king. Orange in particular was solitary, unsettled, and independent, but both he and Egmont had served the Netherlands long and well as stadtholders of vital provinces.[29] Orange served in Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht, while Egmont had the same duties in Flanders and Artois. They also were key members of the Council of State, hitherto a vital part of the government, but cast in a meager role in the new Spanish order. Philip, convinced of the superiority of his crown, wanted the Netherlands to assume its proper place, which was rather modest in his estimation, and he thought that the aristocrats were no longer suited to great tasks. Thus, even as they surrounded Margaret in their finery and did all the correct things according to protocol, they and others in the Fleece were already feeling rebuffed. The rift was obvious as the ceremonies continued, and Marcantonio da Mula, the Venetian ambassador, worried that Philip had created reservoirs of jealousy and anger.[30]

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[28] Ibid., 226–227.

[29] The complicated distribution of power in the provinces required cooperation and dedication by all parties to preserve privileges and traditions. The "Coutumes de Brabant" provide an example of the elaborate laws and practices that defined the office of stadtholder. The complex laws of the Antwerp region are available in a digital copy from www.kuleuven-kortrijk.be/facult/rechten/. See the detailed work of Martin Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555–1590* (Cambridge: 1992), 13–30, and Guy Wells, *Antwerp and the Government of Philip II* (Amsterdam: 1985), 25–29.

[30] Gachard, *Relations des ambassadeurs*, 2: Report of Marcantonio da Mula.

The king's choice of Granvelle as the true center of power in the Netherlands also created problems, for he was so clearly a parvenu in a world that still revered the place of aristocrats. Even Philip did not admire him completely or he would have taken him to Spain to serve in the most powerful councils. The son of Charles V's close advisor and a member of the new court aristocracy of the robe, Granvelle had keen intelligence, a wide knowledge of the world, a great capacity for work, and a massive ego that swept all before it. His swift rise based on ability and intelligence irritated those born to power, who most often shunned intellectual effort as undignified. Nor was his absolute dedication to royal power welcome outside of the court. Margaret, remembering how he had facilitated her marriage into the Medici family, had reason to espouse his cause and did so as long as his personality and avarice did not get in the way. At first, all went well between them and Granvelle was present at every stage of the meeting at Ghent, assisting in Philip's presentation of her to the Estates General.[31]

The session began on August 7. Philip introduced her to the Estates General and then allowed Granvelle to give a speech affirming her power and defining her tasks. His remarks made Margaret seem to be a true regent and governess, with power of patronage and the promise of 67,000 florins each year to meet expenses. However, he then turned to giving instructions to the representatives on their duty to obey the king and to maintain religion. Trouble erupted immediately when a representative from Artois rose and demanded that Spanish troops leave the Netherlands since peace prevailed. Other members spoke of the need for Philip to rule with the advice and counsel of the great lords. In the face of such a direct attack on his policies, Philip became furious. He left the room and Granvelle had to follow to calm him and bring him back. Granvelle concluded the day with remarks on the reasons Philip had chosen Margaret, citing her full knowledge of the Netherlands.[32] The public ceremonies of installation that followed revealed none of the restrictions the king was determined to place on her regency; indeed, to all appearances it was a triumph for Margaret. Philip played his part well, honoring her and going through the motions of imparting power. Margaret, adorned in the jewels and elaborate dress of the Spanish court, did one unexpected thing when she took a seat with the representatives of the cities in the Estates General. Neither

[31] Iongh, *Madama*, 231–232.
[32] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 137–139.

Philip nor Granvelle had considered that she would act in an independent fashion. Nor did Margaret dream that her ceremonious installation was the opening of a period of religious distress and a storm of protest against the aspirations and demands of Spanish majesty.

Philip, still angry, began preparations for his departure and on August 10 left for the port town of Vlissingen. It was during those days that he gave Margaret her formal instructions. The public document granted her full, traditional power, but there was a secret instruction with an utterly different character. Great theoretical authority dissolved in the face of severe restrictions, and Philip took all the powers of patronage away, keeping the lucrative appointments in his own hands. In the public instruction that he prepared to regulate Margaret's government and her relations with the great aristocrats, he formally installed her in lofty terms. In contrast, the secret instruction shattered her plans for an active court and thrust her deep into the shadow cast by Granvelle. Although her governance in the provinces depended on the cooperation of the Order, Philip commanded that Granvelle and the Privy Council dominate, thus guaranteeing hostile relations while simultaneously tying her hands. Determined to rule from afar, Philip called on the regent to serve as head of the government in name only. The Council of State, which she chaired, and the Council of Finance assumed secondary positions, being allowed to discuss issues only after receiving instructions from Spain. As regent, Philip wanted Margaret to maintain the appearance of traditional rule, but the government actually rested on a single powerful council. The regent's fundamental tasks involved facilitating the meetings of the Privy Council and the Councils of Finance and State, encouraging attendance by the aristocrats chosen for membership, and punishing breaches of secrecy concerning council debates. The true duty of all in the government was to obey the king and to extirpate heresy and that work was to be directed by his agents in Brussels—Granvelle and the Privy Council. Margaret was to relay its decisions to the governors and authorities in the provinces for prompt, unquestioning compliance.[33]

The provisions in the final instructions clearly defined the conflicts that would haunt her regime because they cast her in a role that was out of keeping with her character and training.[34] The promise of a new order and a time of peace gave way to paralysis and strife. In addition to

[33] *Correspondance française*, 1: LXVII and LXX–LXXVII; Iongh, *Madama*, 233.
[34] Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 218.

subordinating her to the councils, the king's orders required Margaret to maintain the status quo but placed reservations on her authority that made the task impossible. He excluded her from issues relating to the honor of the crown and the good of the commonwealth, reserving those tasks for Granvelle and ordering her not to offend him and the other members of the Privy Council, Viglius and Berlaymont. Its members would communicate with him directly and would participate in all patronage and ecclesiastical appointments, over which Margaret could exercise no influence. He saw her task as one of keeping him informed so that he would never be surprised. The documents exuded Philip's characteristic attitude, for he defined good subjects, among whom he numbered Margaret, as subordinates who sought his good will, obtaining thereby personal prosperity and peace. No particular interests had the right to interfere, especially in matters concerning religion.[35]

However, problems arose from the key issues of church reform and the presence of heresy. After the Treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis confirmed the Hapsburg triumph and left Spain dominant in Christendom, Philip saw unlimited opportunity to act for God and Spain and convinced himself of the saintly character of his policies. He thus discounted opposition in the Netherlands and sought to increase the number of executions for heresy, to limit the competence and jurisdiction of local courts, and to hasten the introduction of the new bishops, some of whom had reputations as inquisitors.[36] Opposition intensified when Philip entrusted the reform to Granvelle, who joined assiduous attention to royal commands with careful cultivation of his own interests in the episcopal reorganization. Even enthusiasts for reform of Catholicism lost heart when it came to mean power for Philip and prestige and wealth for Granvelle, who appointed himself Archbishop of Malines, Primate of the Netherlands. The king also established officials in the provinces to prosecute heretics, thus directly challenging local judicial authorities. Ignoring the need to include Margaret because of her judicial responsibilities, just prior to his departure the king granted extended inquisitorial powers to Pierre Titelmans, a dean of the college at Renaix, and designated Flanders as a center for his investigations. Titelmans thereafter had the power to punish and correct

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[35] Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London: 1979), 45–46, passages that emphasize how carefully Philip II constructed the court and council system in Brussels.

[36] Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477–1806. (Oxford: 1996),* 143; P. Th. Van Beuningen, *Wilhelmus Lindanus als inquisiteur en bischop* (Assen, 1966), 73–109.

people as he deemed appropriate without the least regard for traditions, laws, or legal standards. All officials were to help him, making arrests on his instructions and holding prisoners incommunicado. Furthermore, the king threatened to treat as a heretic anyone who did not respond promptly to the inquisitor's demands. In the countryside where people lacked the protection of privileges, Titelmans enjoyed considerable success, but his investigations in cities met with stiff resistance.[37]

In fact, by the end of Philip's stay the presence of heresy clearly exceeded the repressive capacity of inquisitors. Lutherans, Anabaptists, and the variety of reformed groups that supported Calvinism had survived the vigorous persecutions of the preceding years. The vivid contrast between the ineffective efforts at Catholic reform and the spectacular success of Calvinism remained a permanent backdrop to the new regime. The king disregarded all these movements and remained aloof from the turmoil that his religious policy generated.[38] The stark reality of conflicting views on faith remained invisible to him, and religion provided only one point of confrontation. He had no patience with opposition and had ordered a secret inquiry into the lives and habits of the members of the Council of Brabant, whose members had questioned the wisdom of maintaining high troop levels in a time of peace. Hampered by the novelty of their investigation in the Netherlands, the officers appointed to the task quickly revealed themselves and caused uproar. Philip responded with an order requiring his new subjects to answer all questions posed by his agents and not to seek any justification. Later, Margaret's first dispatch to the king referred to the investigation and noted that it continued to excite concern about his intentions.[39]

His attitude had fueled conflict, and long-simmering issues erupted into heated confrontation. As room to maneuver became limited, Margaret's importance as regent increased, but even she had serious reservations about her position. An Italian-trained princess accustomed to intrigues and diplomacy, she could not fully convert to the role of functionary in the service of a cold, intolerant ruler. She honored her brother but scarcely knew him, and her duty to the provinces put serious strains on family loyalty. More like her father in regards to sensitivity to the complexity of human

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[37] P. Beuzart, "Pierre Titelmans et l'inquisition en Flandre," *BSHPF* 63 (1914) 224–242.

[38] Geoffrey Parker, *Philip II* (Boston: 1978), 3–23 for a general treatment of how Philip developed as ruler in the early years of his reign; Henry Kamen, *Philip II* (New Haven: 1997), 77–78 for a sympathetic view of Philip in the Netherlands.

[39] *Correspondance française*, 1: 7. Margaret to Philip, 14 Aug. 1559.

affairs, Margaret could not sympathize with Philip's principles, character, mentality, and methodology. The central issues of taxation, church reform, and suppression of Protestantism had complexities that she saw and he did not, and their divergent responses and methods eroded their relations, severing the meager bonds formed during their initial meeting. Even at the moment she assumed the regency, Margaret could sympathize with the worries of his subjects who saw their land being reduced to the status of a Spanish colony, surrendering commercial independence and traditional freedom in cultural life to foreign direction.[40] The king resented the economic and political self-confidence of the provinces and actively disliked the representative character of the government. Prior to the meeting at Ghent, conflicts had erupted over specific issues, but the meeting of the Estates General served to make differing interpretations of religious and political life permanent points of disagreement. The king withdrew, leaving behind an enormous debt and a deep reservoir of anger that forced Margaret to face crisis situations even before she had been able to assemble a court to assist her.

Just before Philip set sail to return to Spain, his new regent had to be the bearer of bad news, a role that thereafter became permanent. Unable to debate with the king, the Estates in Ghent simply refused to agree to new taxes. The Estates saw no reason to perpetuate taxes in time of peace. In relating the details of the recalcitrance of the deputies to the king, Margaret advanced her own ideas on negotiating with the Estates General and with the equally difficult provincial estates. Rather than making blunt demands, she asked the king to correspond directly with the leaders of each estate. Margaret recognized the unpopularity of the king's tax proposal, one designed to pay for Spanish troops and German mercenaries stationed in the fortresses adjoining France. Peace prevailed and the provinces remained burdened by the debt assumed for the emperor during the course of the war. Margaret thought that bargaining could produce the desired revenue. However, her request coincided with the furor over Philip's commission to investigate the personal lives of the members of the Council of Brabant. His indifference to their reaction weakened Margaret's ability to represent him effectively in subsequent negotiations. Because of his conviction that councils should govern, Philip was unconcerned and never considered her views seriously, thus underestimating her as well as the situation.

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[40] Iongh, *Madama*, 241–242.

3. *A New Court*

The clash over the investigation became typical of the difficulties facing her regency. Philip saw conspiracy everywhere and sought to investigate, whereas Margaret saw no evil in the traditional obstinacy of provincial leaders. However, differing opinions irritated the king, who never really seemed to see the Netherlands while he visited, and who developed an enduring dislike for them on his departure. For Margaret, the relief she felt when the king finally moved onto his ships quickly gave way to frustration as she attempted to govern in the midst of a swarm of difficulties. She happily acknowledged the unique and splendid character of the provinces but knew that they remained together in an uneasy relationship, bound by fragile accords among testy subjects. Margaret candidly remarked that the provinces agreed on few things, but suspicion of the king and dislike of the presence of Spanish troops became points that bound all parties together. Otherwise diffidence, disdain, and distrust prevailed. In her words, only seeing Spanish sails departing occasioned general happiness, and then but for a moment.[41] The question of Spanish forces became urgent between Philip and his new subjects, who viewed their presence as a lingering disease affecting the provinces. Royal requests for support of the troops were countered with a petition that the forces leave with the king.[42] Jacques Wesenbeke remarked in his memoir that:

> in the beginning the petition seemed strange to the King, who nevertheless had to consider the great insistence and remonstrance of his estates and subjects, who gave him to understand that the land would be wasted and ruined; moreover, he heard that the . . . duchess, who served as governor, along with the great lords of the land, thought it reasonable and well founded and would themselves have granted it. But that notwithstanding, one only had to glance at the possibility that in the great space of time that the troops had already been there, how many tricks had been used to keep them there, how many taxes had been imposed to pay for them, and what damages had been committed before they withdrew to barracks.[43]

Philip had claimed, Wesenbeke complained, that he was going to send the soldiers to fight the Turks when he had no such plans, a deception that further alienated the people.

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[41] *Correspondance française*, 1: 320–326. Margaret to Philip, 2 Nov. 1560.
[42] Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 134–137.
[43] Jacques de Wesenbeke, *Mémoires* (Brussels: 1859), 98–99.

Increasingly bothered by these suspicions, Margaret remained at Ghent until Philip sailed, but the festivities were truly over as she confronted the reality of towns, nobles, and clergy refusing to agree to taxes. The memory of the king's attitude lingered and the Estates General remained firm in its refusal to assist in financial matters. The representatives were aware that their unresponsiveness offended his sense of majesty, which itself dismayed them. The confrontation became a permanent issue, and Philip never allowed the Estates General to meet again during Margaret's regency. Granvelle felt that each time the body met royal authority diminished. Likewise the king and his minister dismissed its leadership, the members of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and the final session they had together was strained, with formalities scarcely masking deep mutual antipathy that ultimately affected all public affairs. On August 24, Margaret traveled to Vlissingen to bid Philip farewell in a final cold interview in a suddenly somber relationship. She took Alexander with her, parting with him in a cheerless environment and sending him on a compulsory voyage to a land and court utterly unknown to either of them. Her son was just another trophy for the king to take back to Spain after five years in the Netherlands. Although Philip's luggage included paintings and books that he had accumulated, his memories were far from fond. His parting orders highlighted his dislike and the other huge problem of the day, religious divisions. Philip wanted Margaret to order the town of Middleburg to hasten the torture and execution of recently captured heretics, claiming that she would be serving God and pleasing him.[44]

Burdened with that chilling order, which she ignored, and saddened by leaving Alexander as a hostage, Margaret made her way back to Ghent and then started a slow, formal progress to Brussels. There, sumptuous festivities put on by the city corporations and the chambers of rhetoric marked her entry. The principal chamber of rhetoric, *La Guirlande de Marie*, put on luxurious and expensive presentations in a parade led by heralds and trumpets followed by seven large decorated carts and seventy smaller ones. Some of the floats carried people representing the gods of antiquity while others bore symbols of the provinces. The theme was "How can we come together joyfully and then depart amicably." The parade continued with more musicians leading the members of the five guilds, the magistrates, the aristocracy, and the notables. Three hundred of the aristocrats

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[44] G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini a Cosimo de' Medici*, Mario Battistini ed. (Rome: 1950), 114; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 140.

wore elaborate costumes and were on horseback. At the conclusion of the performances, Margaret formally took up residence in the Coudenburg Palace, the symbol of the Dukes of Burgundy.[45]

She had many things to do, for it was an Italian princess who had returned to the Netherlands, and she even had to study writing French and Flemish again. However, her years in Italy served her well when she finally moved into the palace. Her political and intellectual senses were honed by childhood experiences when she was rudely thrust into the cold calculations of Italian politics. She had grown to like the politics of both court and country and she also arrived with open views on religion learned during tumultuous years in Rome.[46] She understood the problems revealed by Protestant fervor and was utterly without the fanaticism of Spanish Catholicism with regard to heresy. The Moro portrait of her from this period depicts an elegant and authoritative woman. At thirty-six, she was proud and already hard to manipulate, particularly when she faced challenges to her power or family. Her initial court entourage was large, with two thousand people filling the palace. It included a number of Italians, particularly in her inner circle and at the higher levels of dignity, which raised the ire of those who wanted the presence of more local officials. Francesco Marchi headed her court staff and supervised the daily operations. However, she created an international world, mixing people wherever possible and freely blending the musical talents of Marco Justiniani who came with her from Italy and the local musician Pieter de Groot while also mingling the political advice of Tomaso Machiavelli, who had come from the Parma court, and Tomás Armenteros, who served both her and Granvelle.[47]

Intelligent, capable, and confident, Margaret had a thorough dedication to work and did not shrink from old issues arising from her birth. Among the aristocrats her background limited her and Philip regarded her as a secondary figure over whom he could exert complete control, particularly because he held Alexander as hostage. All greatly underestimated her and ignored her talent and enthusiasm for the task of governing. Reserved and cautious, she understood the attitudes and aspirations

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[45] Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 219; Wauters, *Histoire de Bruxelles*, 391–392; Potter, *Chronik*.

[46] Leneppe, *Les années italiennes*; Famiano Strada, *Della guerra di Fiandra* (Rome: 1639), 1: 45.

[47] Seishiro Niwa, "Madama Margaret of Parma's Patronage of Music" *Early Music* 2005 Vol. 33, No. 1, 2538; Geoffrey Parker, *Spain and the Netherlands, 1559–1659: Ten Studies* (Glasgow, 1979).

of those in the administration even as she had to adjust to dangerous and unpleasant situations.[48] Her perception was that the position she occupied required caution because the office was devoted equally to maintaining the provinces and to serving the king, duties she initially regarded as compatible. In the time of troubles that began immediately, her greatest problems arose from conflict between those two tasks, made worse by limited power and inadequate funding. The king's commands clashed with the particularist tendencies of the provinces, and a vigorous Calvinist movement repeatedly created situations that demanded a more powerful and costly response than she could deliver as regent.

While she was able to establish a full court with ease and pleasure, her duties as regent quickly took on a difficult, strained character as the reality of Philip's government became apparent. Granvelle and Armenteros tried to guide her through lessons in statecraft and policy and were impressed by her zeal for work.[49] The aristocrats at court were also surprised by her knowledge and understanding as she quickly established procedures that would serve her for the whole of the regency. The foremost of these was consultation, whenever possible with Orange and Egmont, over issues that might breed strife. At every opportunity, Margaret tried to occupy a middle, moderate position when she presided over the Council of State. In contrast, Granvelle attempted to control her from the very beginning, presenting her with policies for implementation after the Privy Council had formulated them. During the early months of her regency she began to realize that Granvelle sought to dominate her and she had second thoughts about their relationship. She came to regard him as a marvel of deception who was not a man of his word. Margaret began to correspond directly with Philip, sending him some private letters in Italian to thwart the prying eyes of the creatures put in her court by Granvelle and Armenteros. She expressed caution about the direction of the Privy Council, but the king ignored her and continued to favor Granvelle.

Like the king, Granvelle discounted her intellectual gifts and political insight, always seeking to direct her every move in implementing the contentious policies he instigated in a consistently tactless manner. His career had been exclusively in the service of rulers and he had no

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48 Dumont, *Marguerite*, 143–144.

49 Francesco Marchi, *Cento Lettere di . . . Marchi*, Ronchini ed., (Rome:) 1; M. Van Durme, *Antoon Perrenot: Bisschop van Utrecht, Kardinaal van Granvelle, Minister van Karl V en van Filips II (1517–1586)* (Brussels: 1953). Armenteros was the nephew of Gonzalo Perez, Philip II's secretary.

personal theories or philosophy. Already known for his arrogance and supreme self-confidence, he never even noticed criticism. His personal life was rather more scandalous than that suggested for a bishop, but it was not particularly out of the ordinary for the church at that moment. Wanting to live and rule without considering the place or its people, Granvelle unthinkingly conformed to Philip's view of the Netherlands as a unified whole that owed absolute obedience to him. The views of both men were contrary to their own experiences in the provinces, and their inability to acknowledge the representative character of political life and the complex economic structure in the cities and provinces seriously undermined their efforts to rule. Viglius and Berlaymont also assisted on the Privy Council, but neither cared to voice any opinions outside of the crown's wishes.

That Margaret did not subscribe to Spanish views went unnoticed. Granvelle thought that she was performing splendidly as a complacent symbolic head of government and he wrote to praise the relations she had with the people. By 1560, Margaret had attracted such favor that a merchant in Gouda ordered a stained glass window in her honor in St. Janskerk.[50] But her personal abilities and qualities did not ensure success. From the moment the king departed it became evident that the true tragedy of Margaret of Parma's regency originated in Philip II's attitudes and aspirations. Personality and conviction became central issues as Philip showed no empathy with the provinces and little regard for their judicial and political independence. Hostility to the king's political plans emerged as soon as they became known and hardened as Granvelle assumed the most powerful positions in Brussels. The new regime ignored the members of the Golden Fleece, but it could not end their influence. Orange, Egmont, and Glanjon remained at court and sat on the Council of State, but each followed a private agenda and rarely favored Margaret with more than condescension. Egmont was flashy and vastly popular, but impulsive and thoughtless. In contrast, Orange was intelligent, thoughtful, and ambitious, always seeking to build on his many titles and possessions. Both were Catholic but were indifferent to the niceties of dogma. Philip de Stavele, the Lord of Glanjon, had talent as a diplomat but was also a spendthrift. When they cooperated among themselves, the leaders of the Order had sufficient power to hinder all government initiatives, and they thwarted Granvelle at will. Philip expressed amazement at their failure to conform and at Granvelle's inability to command obedience in the name

[50] Wouter Crabeth did the preliminary sketch.

of the king since, in his opinion, debate should stop instantly when royal will became known. Thus his assumptions bluntly challenged privileges, prerogatives, exemptions, and the habit of conditional obedience. Previously, demands on the privileged by the Lord of the Netherlands had been of a personal and local character; requiring subordination to a Privy Council ruling for a remote king necessitated a complete reinterpretation of sovereign power.[51]

The king's plans also had practical disadvantages. He ordered Margaret to keep him fully informed and to refer all major issues to him for resolution. Ordinary dispatches, drafted in French, took one month to get to Madrid in good weather. Responses frequently took three months since everything had to be discussed in council, where a summary of views would be drafted in Spanish and then sent to Philip. He then considered the issue personally and drafted a reply in French. However, he did not respond to all of her missives and he rarely addressed her concerns in a meaningful manner. While this process suited the king and the Privy Council, it proved to be ineffective in dealing with immediate problems. As a consequence, Margaret, who sat on the Council of State along with the governors, often had to cope with problems using her own initiative, facing the turmoil and disorder that were constant in public affairs. Margaret had a clear idea of what was necessary to protect and to fund the land. In 1560 she proposed that the provinces have 3200 troops to maintain the border fortifications at a cost over three years of four million florins. The provincial estates stubbornly refused to consider the matter.[52] Philip's failure to address the debt from the war utterly alienated them, and the Spanish troops remained. Just as bad, there were still German mercenaries in the provinces and, since there was no money to pay them, they had started to live off the land.[53] Moreover, Margaret could not meet the costs of the court with traditional resources from the royal domains in the Netherlands. "And as for the domain of Your Majesty, so much of it has been sold that little remains, and there is nothing left to pay the ordinary wages of Your Majesty's ministers, judicial as well as otherwise, or to sustain either ordinary or extraordinary expenses, up to the point of hardly being able to dispatch this courier".[54]

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[51] M. Van Durm, *Antoon Perrenot*.
[52] *Correspondance française*, 1:117–140. Margaret to Philip, 17 Mar. 1560.
[53] Iongh, *Madama*, 247.
[54] *Correspondance française*, 119.

Her sense of calm and contentment was quickly lost and she had to become adept at desperate searches for expedients. Neither side would budge. Philip began to be steadfast in his stinginess and wanted her to turn to the estates for new funding, including the imposition of a salt tax. They refused, expressing concern over their debts and a faltering economy and fearing that he would use the troops against the people. Margaret warned that should he fail to help them find a remedy, "all this machine will one day suddenly tumble down: in that Your Majesty will suffer a loss which you know and understand quite well, and I will suffer shame and regret so insupportable that I would rather, before it happened, see myself a hundred feet underground."[55] The king's response was perfunctory and offered no remedy. The open disagreement over philosophy of rule created bitterness and rancor that remained as the enduring legacy of the meeting at Ghent.

In short, Margaret became regent under impossible circumstances. Her years in Italy, combative as they were, hardly prepared her for the ferocity of the strife that erupted in the provinces during her tenure in office. Charles V's departure had initiated a period of misunderstanding and confrontation in the Netherlands as Philip quickly became vexed with the independent nature of his new subjects. In contrast, Margaret of Parma had arrived with a sympathetic view of her native provinces, but her career depended on Philip. While her tenure lasted almost ten years, her regime was beset by complaints and problems. However, Margaret certainly did not assume that trouble would dominate her, and she approached her tasks with a positive attitude. To her, public life in the Netherlands seemed no different from that in other lands in Christendom and she was fully prepared to manage difficulties with a mixture of persuasion and compromise. She wanted to participate fully in the life of the provinces without creating any fear of aggrandizement, as would have been the case had the position gone to one of the great aristocrats. Alas, the times became anything but auspicious. The aristocratic response to her appointment, economic difficulties, Philip II's autocratic practices, and the popularity of the Calvinist reformed church coalesced to create massive problems that devastated the political and social milieu in which Margaret would ordinarily have operated effectively. Intelligent and aware, she recognized that political and religious changes had inspired a charged, intolerant atmosphere in which values became relative and

[55] Ibid., 121.

loyalties uncertain. Sympathetic members of her court complained of religious disorders and of the leading aristocrats entertaining foreign dignitaries without informing the court.[56]

Worse, the offices she came to fulfill had considerable responsibility but, for her, very little actual power. In the past, the regent acted in place of the absentee Lord of the Netherlands. They supervised judicial, fiscal, and general political affairs; made some religious appointments; and as governor-general joined with provincial governors or stadtholders in general administration and the maintenance of order. Even in the best of times, meager financial reserves and modest patronage accompanied the appointments. Contributions from the estates of the provinces in the form of subsidies and duties joined with grants from the Lord of the Netherlands to fund the court and its expenses, but all financial arrangements had an irregular character. Without the support of Philip, the absence of permanent legal and institutional support diminished the power of the offices and exaggerated the importance of the personalities involved. Even more than was customary, Margaret had to depend on the cooperation and goodwill of those she wished to govern.[57]

Nevertheless, by nature and habit the new regent had the capacity to establish a suitable and traditional administration. The greatest problem involved the king, who never gave Margaret adequate support to confront problems boldly. Nor could she rely on local assistance. The brisk competition for the regency among the egotistical, hypersensitive aristocrats left them furious over the entire affair. Charles V's regents had continued the Burgundian tradition of presiding over an elegant, cultured court in which the privileged mingled in all important affairs. Even the wealthy commoners of the cities had enjoyed place and a sense of importance during those regimes. Margaret wanted to create precisely the same type of court, but was shunned by the disdainful aristocracy. Some comments directed against her were purely personal. The chronicler Strada decried her preference for hunting over feminine pursuits, and his unkind remarks were typical of her critics.[58] Such personal attacks meant little, but they established the tone of the court outside her immediate circle. Her first year ended on a strained note as the system imposed by Philip II already resulted in deadlock in Brussels and as the beginnings of economic retreat

[56] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 113–116.
[57] Ibid, 118–122.
[58] Strada, *Della guerra di Fiandra*, 1: 50.

severely limited her activities. Revenues from the provinces declined, creating severe shortages and distress. Brabant and Flanders continued to enjoy prosperity, and Antwerp remained the largest commercial and financial center in Europe, but the provincial leaders, particularly among the commons, began to withdraw their support. The merchants had a strong attachment to humanism with its principles of education, involvement, and independence. Although they had enjoyed a good relationship with Charles V, they rapidly cooled toward Philip II and had little interest in supporting his goals. Under their new king, they saw no connection between Hapsburg policies and the welfare of the provinces. Indeed, quite the opposite was true and they thus rejected taxes absolutely. While Margaret was startled by the candor with which the estates resisted taxes on the basis of policy, Granvelle and Philip II were infuriated, dismissing the very idea that anyone had the right to question the crown. However, an educated commercial and professional group that honored individualism and rationality questioned the practices of both the court and the church. They had little tolerance for arbitrary authority. In meetings of the estates in the provinces their attitude offended the representatives of the church and the aristocracy, but all three orders joined together to resist Philip's demand for money for troops.[59]

Thus opposition to Philip II gave even traditional adversaries a common focus from the moment Margaret assumed the regency. The presence of Spanish troops became the first point of contention and the ensuing confrontation set the standard for all subsequent encounters. Granvelle stayed safely in the background, leaving Margaret to relate all of the difficulties to the king. Thus it was in her letters that he learned that the provincial estates had begun to question whether the king's word had any value and that the issue of the troops provided an opportunity to speak on everything that troubled them about Spanish rule. Margaret, after some consultation with Orange and Egmont, established her own policy on the issue, casting her lot with those who wanted the troops out and adding her voice to their cause despite the views of Philip and Granvelle. Philip longed to have the troops remain to preserve Spanish power and possibly to interfere in French domestic difficulties. His threat to become a partisan in French affairs was another reason the joy Margaret had felt when moving to Brussels eroded quickly during 1560. The Council of State cautioned against any interference in France, noting that the Netherlands

[59] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 153.

had difficulties in sufficient number. Worse, she had to report the desperate condition of the Spanish troops, who were unpaid and unfed. Their ravaging of some coastal areas added a sharp note of danger to the endless petitions that streamed into the Spanish court. Philip finally responded in November 1560, ordering the starving troops to return to Spain by sea.[60]

Margaret also had trouble with Philip as she labored to better the position of her family. The future of Alexander was a primary concern, and she wanted to renegotiate the agreement reached at Ghent between Philip and Ottavio. A Spanish garrison remained in the citadel at Piacenza and Margaret longed for an end to that symbol of Farnese subordination. Even as she became more confident as regent in the Netherlands, Margaret had to come to the unhappy realization that Philip was determined to leave the troops as another guarantee of Ottavio's good behavior. In Brussels, only Granvelle gave her a sympathetic hearing and even helped Ottavio when he came in the summer of 1560 to gain favor by revealing an anti-Spanish conspiracy in Rome. Ottavio and Margaret also wanted Granvelle to help them negotiate a marriage between Alexander and the daughter of her uncle Ferdinand, the emperor. In this aim, she had the support and good will of Philip. Granvelle engaged himself to assist in the matter, but he did so in an unenthusiastic manner. He thought that she cared only for the affairs of her family, which added another reason for the growing coolness between the two.[61] In his reports, Granvelle said that Margaret and Ottavio were trustworthy precisely because they were led by family ambition, but he also saw the dangers in thwarting her, telling Philip of her growing nervousness and sense of malaise. Philip tried to assuage her fears, telling Margaret that he also was concerned about finding the proper bride for Alexander. What the king did not say was how little interest he had in strengthening another Italian family and, after calming Margaret, he again slipped into the total silence on important matters which, along with insincerity, became his foremost characteristic.[62]

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60 Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 124–142; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 166.
61 Iongh, *Madama*, 250.
62 Lefevre, *"Madama"*, 232–233.

CHAPTER THREE

LOST ILLUSIONS

1. *New Court, New Hopes, New Obstacles*

Spanish troops finally left the Netherlands in January 1561. The sight of ships carrying the troops away was cause for celebration, but it came at a heavy price since the king took the withdrawal as a rebuke. In Brussels, Granvelle was equally furious. He thought of himself as a power broker, and failure to retain the Spanish force to supplement the troops raised in the Netherlands did not conform to his self-image. The cardinal became a major issue and troubled Margaret's career in the Netherlands. Although tarnished, he remained dominant and continued to amass power and wealth as he directed public affairs. As a consequence, Margaret never knew whether to act as sovereign or servant. However, the departure of the troops was a relief despite the anger of Granvelle and she occupied herself with her court at the Coudenburg Palace, reviving it as a center of art and culture. A personal love of luxury and a desire to make the palace a symbol of her success combined in an effort to have Brussels become far more than a political center. In 1561, Margaret was able to commission works from Antonio Moro, Giulio Clovio, Frans Floris, Jacques Jonghelinck, and Michael Coxcie, all artists of the highest reputation.[1] She also sent Corneill Loots, Giovanni Vandrecor, and Arnold Fiamingi to work at the court in Parma.[2] Already active in the design and construction of a palace in Piacenza, Margaret hoped to construct a new palace in Brussels and had architectural drawings prepared. In Piacenza she had worked with the architect Jacopo Vignola, wishing to make the new court setting there as beautiful as the palaces she had occupied in Rome.[3] In Brussels, Margaret's eager patronage extended beyond art to music, tapestries, and stained glass; the early commissions came at a fast pace and the future

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[1] G. Dumont, *Marguerite de Parme: Bâtarde de Charles-Quint* (Brussels: 1999), 180.

[2] Ibid., 184; Bert Meijer, *Parma e Bruxelles. Committenza e collezionismo farnesiani alle due corte* (Parma: 1988) 15–21.

[3] Bruno Adorni, *Il ruolo di Margherita d'Austria nella construzione de palazzo Farnese di Piacenza* in Silvia Mantini ed., *Margherita d'Austria (1522–1586): Costruzioni politiche e diplomazia, tra corte Farnese e Monarchia spagnola* (Rome: 2003), 107–126.

Fig. 2. Medal honoring Margaret. British Museum.

looked glorious. Frans Floris came to court in 1562 to paint a portrait of Margaret, and Maarten de Vos worked there also. She maintained regular contact with Italy, corresponding with artists she had sent to Parma, but also receiving reports from Thomas Machiavelli on political and religious affairs in Rome, Parma, and Trent, where the church council continued to meet. He also furnished information about Abruzzo, and she never ceased to concern herself with issues of justice and administration. From merchants and diplomats, Margaret also gathered information on events in England, Scotland, and France.[4] She thus made every effort to create an informed and lively court that served as a cultural center.

The only dissonant note came from Granvelle's ability to commission even more works to adorn his own palace. Pieter Brueghel, the finest painter of the time, had recently moved to Brussels but did not seek patronage from anyone in power after a brief time of work for Granvelle. He followed a strikingly independent path in life and did not wish to

[4] Francesco Marchi, *Cento Lettere.* Ronchini ed. (Rome: 1864), 2–4; R. Lefevre, *"Madama." Margarita d'Austria (1522–1586)* (Rome: 1986), 222.

conform to the demands of a court.[5] In any event, financial and political reality quickly smothered Margaret's plans as turmoil took up residence at court and money vanished. Only Granvelle obtained a Brueghel and continued to be able to commission more paintings; he even took Margaret's plans for a new palace and converted them to his own use. That was an early indication of the strife that would later develop between the two, but it also revealed the vast wealth Granvelle accumulated as he took church offices and benefices for his own use. Without such lucrative resources Margaret had to abandon her patronage, leaving Granvelle as the only influence in art, music, and cartography.[6] The last work that she commissioned was a bronze fountain for the gardens of the Coudenburg Palace by Jacques Jonghelinck.[7]

Late in 1561, personal issues began to trouble her and Margaret took up embroidery to ward off increasing nervousness. She worried constantly about negotiations to find a bride for Alexander and her request for the return of the citadel of Piacenza to Farnese rule, both matters that became sensitive issues of honor. When her hopes to marry Alexander into the Austrian Hapsburg house failed, she feared that her own status as an illegitimate child ruined his possibilities. Philip was also troubled by the situation and continued his efforts without consulting Margaret. He concentrated on finding Alexander a wife in Portugal, but it was the sole concession he made to her. He steadfastly refused to discuss Piacenza, and she gradually grew bitter, lamenting the meager rewards she received in exchange for a son and her service. In addition, the promise of regular funding from Spain was not kept and the provinces steadily reduced the tax revenues destined for the court. There were other harsh realities, particularly the limitations on her personal authority caused by the manner of her selection, by Philip's instructions, and by Granvelle. They thought of her as a servant, but she longed for genuine authority and financial means, for she knew how to govern. She managed her own court, but her public life was a contest for authority with those who made her affairs their business. However, the arrogant cardinal and his Privy Council had to cooperate with her Council of State. With an obvious dedication to work, she began to demand an active part in discussions of policy and

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[5] Wolfgan Stechow, *Brueghel* (New York: 1968), Meijer, *Parma e Bruxellas*, 128–129.

[6] Meijer, *Parma e Bruxelles*, 153 reviews the Cardinal's wide involvement in cultural matters.

[7] Ibid., 136–138.

public affairs and the monthly dispatches sent to Spain reflected more of her opinions.[8]

Even with a small measure of increased power, Margaret did not have great expectations. She would always be a regent under pressure, acting for an unpopular king who held her son as a hostage. Because the political and religious developments of the Netherlands were not to his liking, Philip was often threatening. He made it clear that if Alexander died, he would not tolerate continued Farnese possession of Parma and Piacenza, and Margaret would be reduced to being just another client of his court. Margaret also feared the behavior of Ottavio, knowing that Philip had good reason to detest him and to want Alexander to live down his father's miserable reputation. The king did recognize her dilemma and made modest grants of money for her and Alexander.[9] Despite her personal dislike of Ottavio, Margaret had to back his ambitions, if only to serve her own. Thus she always acted with care and circumspection, sometimes seeming contradictory. She tried to remain cordial with Granvelle while also seeking favorable relations with Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn. She represented Philip in provinces that he disliked and she admired. He limited her power but criticized her for not acting decisively. Ottavio also expected more of her and sent his personal agent, Paolo Vetelli, to Brussels to upbraid her publicly for failing to secure Farnese interests. Vetelli called for Margaret to resign and to return to Parma because of her failures. Granvelle recorded her emotional, unhappy response, but noted that the event actually served to harden her determination to work to better the provinces and to serve the king. After all, Margaret had no intention of returning to act as Ottavio's wife. She persuaded Vetelli to understand her position and he returned to Parma with the suggestion that Ottavio himself take his cause to the Spanish court for a hearing. Ottavio instantly became quiet on the subject since his prior treachery had permanently poisoned relations with Philip.[10]

In her public life, Margaret nurtured a distinct, neutral court, trying to arbitrate differences to maintain peace because Granvelle had a penchant for alienating the officials who conducted the actual operations of the government. Political strife surrounded Granvelle, who became a

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[8] Ines d'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio Intimo di Margherita* d'Austria (Naples: 1919), 79–81; Jane de Iongh, *Madama, Margaretha van Oostenrijk. Hertogin van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 243–256; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 144–147.

[9] *Correspondance*, 1, 417–449.

[10] Iongh, *Madama*, 267–269.

symbol of division as his greed and arrogance eroded local support for her regime. A true servant of Spanish absolutism, he clashed repeatedly with local estates and law courts in matters of religion, justice, and finance. Clearly hostile toward the cumbersome procedures of the Netherlands, he resolutely circumvented them at every opportunity, offending all who had vested interests and privileges. Margaret tried to forge a solid relationship with him, actually working to get him his cardinal's hat through her friends in Rome, particularly Pius IV, the new pope and an old friend. However, in a response that was typical of him, Granvelle chose to regard his elevation as the result of Philip II's intervention rather than that of a modest figure such as Margaret. Because of his arrogance, she had to shake off hopes of cooperation with him even though she remained reluctant to challenge him. However, his growing unpopularity crippled the government and thrust more responsibility into her hands.[11]

Her correspondence increased to reflect the growing activities of the Council of State, where she assumed greater initiative. While never breaking with Granvelle Margaret became sensitive to the dangers he posed for her and she opened her own lines of contact with the provinces even as she followed his dictates in implementing unpopular policies. Thus she developed good relations with some members of the aristocracy, including those who sat on the Council of Finance—Berlaymont and Philippe de Montmorency, Lord of Hachicourt. The treasurer, Gaspar Schetz, Lord of Grobbendonc, and Barleymont supported her consistently, but they were not from powerful families. Others, including the governors Aremberg and Megen, and members of the Council of State Aerschot and Mansfeld, all of whom enjoyed significance within the aristocracy, remained loyal to court and crown, but shared in the general aristocratic disdain for her.[12] She had strained relations with the leading members of the Golden Fleece, but the presence of Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn kept her government viable and Margaret ignored their contempt as she actively cultivated a greater rapport with them.

The leaders of the Fleece had to be present to give her court legitimacy in the eyes of the people, but Orange jeopardized everything by informing Philip of his decision to marry Anna of Saxony, a Lutheran.

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[11] M. Van Durme, *El Cardinal Granvella (1517–1586). Imperio y revolución bajo Carlos V y Felipe II* (Barcelona: 1957), 244–251.

[12] Philippe de Croy, Duke of Aerschot was stadtholder of Frisia and Charles de Brimeu, Count of Megen was stadtholder of Guelderland. Jean de Ligne, Count of Aremberg and Count Charles of Mansfelt served in the Brussels administration.

Appalled at the idea of such a union, Philip asked Margaret to dissuade him from the match, but instead she increased the conflict by referring the issue to the Privy Council, which infuriated Orange. He dismissed the idea of petitioning Granvelle and the two became irreconcilable opponents from that moment. Determined to marry the Saxon princess, whose rich dowry and powerful father compensated for her plain appearance, Orange immediately prepared to travel to Leipzig and threatened not to return to court if Margaret did not give her immediate approval. That he took the leaders of the Order, her governors, and an additional retinue of eleven hundred mounted men on a trip during such dangerous times irritated her. It clearly demonstrated his influence, and the wedding ceremony itself was an extravaganza worthy of a potentate. Margaret also worried about the religious message of the marriage. With a note of spite, Margaret expressed the hope that the party would not contract something harmful to the repose of the Netherlands during their sojourn in Saxony. She reminded Orange that his new wife had to leave her personal entourage behind and at least appear to live as a Catholic. Always cautious, she placed spies in his chateau at Breda and in the Nassau Palace in Brussels, but Orange and his wife became masters of religious duplicity. Anna attended mass, but surreptitiously carried a Lutheran Bible, and Margaret never caught her in an act of defiance.[13]

Aside from that situation, Margaret acted moderately and gradually Orange and his colleagues came to rely on her. Their fierce opposition to Granvelle increased their cordiality. Orange and the other governors, except for Berlaymont, wrote to the king directly in 1562 to complain about Granvelle's claims to authority and the freedom with which he involved himself in every public matter. To Orange, Granvelle had hardened the hearts of all, pretending to remedy troubles while actually doing the opposite. The prince modestly offered the opinion that only the natural leaders in the provinces could prevent further harm.[14] To protect what small place they had in government, the great lords labored to maintain the Council of State and the governorships, which pleased Margaret and provided a source of strength. She knew of their appeal to the king and never disapproved, but had reason to be cautious. She had herself told Philip that

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[13] Arie Theodorus van Deursen, *Willem van Oranje: Een Biografisch Portret* (Amsterdam: 1995), 25–27; Iongh, *Madama*, 252–254; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 166–169.

[14] *Correspondance . . . Guillaume d'Orange*, L.P. Gachard ed., (Brussels: 1847–1866), 2: 33–39. Letters of 11 March 1563.

only the presence of Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn prevented widespread disorder. Had the members of the Order scorned her completely, no one at court could have moderated Granvelle's moves. Between 1561 and 1563, the cardinal's demands, his peremptory exercise of power, and his eager grasping for offices and places for himself and his retinue made him a permanent liability and aristocratic opposition grew at an alarming rate.

The petition to remove the cardinal sent to the king by Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn met with no success.[15] An astute politician, Granvelle deftly returned their accusations and insinuations. Both sides made easy targets. Greed and vanity surrounded Granvelle's every move, and the members of the Order were models of arrogance and egotism. Margaret's court thus rested between two powerful factions that clouded every issue with fantastic accusations. The bitter contest diminished all government.[16] Had she not assumed greater responsibility, governance would have stopped entirely, although no dramatic episodes marked the change. Nor was the move calculated to enhance her power, and she continued to encourage compromise when disputes erupted, lessening tension but not increasing her control. Compromise and moderation had to suit her policies because the actual centers of power, given the failure of Granvelle, shifted away from Brussels. Philip's court, aristocratic households, provincial governing bodies, urban councils, and the Calvinist consistories with their shadowy leadership all exercised a measure of power. Unfunded and burdened by Philip's policy of inaction, Margaret could only dream of achieving such a position.

Her active role as regent and governess realized her hopes but was not something the king had ever intended. Philip never wished to abandon Granvelle or his policies.[17] He encouraged the determined, abrasive efforts to enforce the placards and to restructure the dioceses, consuming time and effort during 1561 and 1562, and alienating the provincial leadership. Worse, Philip's enthusiasm for absolutism left all wary if not hostile, and as he demanded change, Margaret's efforts as conciliator and intermediary frequently made her the bearer of bad tidings to all concerned. Royal demands, often clearly associated with Granvelle, resulted in bitter stalemates or forced concessions, leaving no one satisfied. The quarrels that

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[15] Van Durme, *El Cardinal Granvella*, 231–240.

[16] G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere dal Giovan Battist Guicciardini a Cosimo e Francesco de' Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1577*, Battistini ed., (Brussels/Rome: 1949), 175–181.

[17] Geoffrey Parker, *Philip II* (London: 1971), 24–37.

emerged from the restructuring of the dioceses focused attention on the fundamental issues involved. The likelihood that each bishop would open an inquisitorial court made all those who valued an independent judiciary apprehensive and gave the resistance a dramatic character. The transfer of money and offices affected only the aristocracy, but the inquisitions threatened the heart of life and civilization. The new organization also utterly destroyed the existing church hierarchy which, although already totally disorderly, was perfectly matched to the structure and attitudes of the provinces. Many among the elite had to surrender lucrative offices and benefices; some areas, such as Antwerp, had to accept episcopal authority for the first time and Margaret was fully exposed to their furious rejection of the plan. Old relationships crumbled before the arbitrary absolutism of Spain, and Granvelle directed the acquisition of benefices to serve as the support, or dowry, of each new bishop. Margaret often had to act to wrest lands and holdings away from incumbents, suffering their outrage while Granvelle sat in the background. At court Guicciardini recognized the frustration of those who saw nothing wrong with the episcopal situation which had grown with the provinces. Exchanging a traditional inefficient order for absolutism mixed with harsh persecution of heresy held no attraction.[18]

The situation became worse when, as part of appointing himself archbishop of Malines, Granvelle granted himself leadership of the rich abbeys of St. Amand and Afflinghen. The positions gave him a say in the estates of Brabant and in the Council of State, but despite his efforts to thrust himself into the working of each body, even attempting to claim precedence over Orange, Granvelle still did not have enough power to do anything beyond generating additional acrimony.[19] His skirmishes with Orange and his utter insensitivity to the anger his ambition generated made him a greater liability for Margaret, who came to prefer the arrogance and ego of Orange to the slippery behavior of Granvelle. There was the added issue of the cardinal's dedication to Spanish absolutism and his efforts to make all the new bishops follow suit. To an aristocracy that regarded church offices as part of their patrimony, bishops who were merely educated commoners in the service of a Spanish king were odious. Granvelle thought that he could enforce his will, ordering the estates of Brabant not to debate his assumption of the abbeys, thus seriously overestimating

[18] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 146–148.
[19] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 174–176.

his own authority and underestimating the power of the province. Rather than securing power, Granvelle and Philip created intense opposition with a broad base.[20]

The tension for Margaret was enormous as she continued to struggle with the Madrid court to achieve both personal and public objectives. The need to advance the fortunes of her family made her anxious to make a grand marriage for her son and to coax Philip into restoring the citadel at Piacenza to Ottavio's control. At the same time she wanted her government in Brussels to have an independent and positive character in the tradition of her predecessors, putting her at odds with Philip who simply wanted obedient functionaries at court. She did not have the temperament to abandon the obligations of her office and blindly follow the harsh dictates of Philip in statecraft and religion. As a consequence, she was often asking for favors from Philip while actively evading his orders and wishes.[21] Thus she was constantly apprehensive about being dismissed, a fear that she shared with Granvelle, who was well aware that the court would demand retribution if affairs went badly.

Gradually, Margaret shaped a unique public persona that did not emerge clearly until crises threatened to sweep the regime away two years later. At that time her determination and firmness surprised those in Madrid. They had paid little attention to her experiences in Brussels. The numerous creditors, the impatient arrogance of both Granvelle and his enemies, aristocratic opposition, competing governments in the provinces, and the crowd of reforming preachers determined to lead the Netherlands down the path of righteousness had long before intruded into her life. She always had problems commanding obedience. People interfered in her every move, subjecting everything to debate and contestation, including the appointment of a new *maître de l'hôtel* for the court because the magistrates of Brussels claimed to control the position. Margaret acted with circumspection, ignoring her family in granting patronage, thus avoiding accusations of favoritism but somehow never earning praise. With the candor that characterized her from the beginning, Margaret noted that "public affairs were not prospering", which could aptly have been a motto for her regime.[22]

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[20] Viglius, *Sur la règne de Philippe II* in *Mémoires de Viglius et d'Hopperus sur la commencement des troubles aux Pays Bas*, Wauters ed. 2 vols. (Brussels: 1858), 1: 10–25.

[21] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 87; Iongh, *Madama*, 257–269.

[22] *Correspondance*, 1: 402–406. Margaret to Philip, 6 Feb. 1561; and 1: 496. Margaret to Philip, 16 Feb. 1561; D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 93–94.

Berlaymont, Arenbergh, Berghes, Megen, and Montigny provided enduring strength for the regime. However, everyone at court had to be wary of Granvelle. As he promoted royal plans in fiscal and religious affairs, the stubborn refusal of local authorities to collaborate became an endless source of trouble. Events during the spring of 1561 brought Margaret real awareness of the problems facing her, particularly the distressing financial situation. As Margaret's worries grew, she ended one report with "For Heaven's sake, do what is necessary before irreparable harm occurs". She feared Philip had grown tired of the refrain of poverty paralyzing her regime, but he responded:

> You must not fear that you are bothering me by your frequent representations of the general want over there. For it is not your persistence that could or might annoy me, but the difficulty that I encounter in providing as well and as quickly as I desire.[23]

Usually, however, he ignored her alarm. Once, dismayed to receive a note instead of the monthly dispatch, Margaret drafted a strong reply, decrying having responsibility for affairs while he bound her hands, forcing her to watch the erosion of all public business. She warned that those who pressed for payment of government debts did not seek words.

> The worst is the hazard that the debt owed to the cities puts us in, as I have often told you, and that those who are owed, including ministers of justice and others, have no means to respond, thereby losing respect and tearing apart authority . . . and if affairs continue to follow this path, it is believable that some little accident (from which God guard us) might befall us and put us in danger of sudden collapse without remedy.[24]

She felt that indifference could inspire an uprising in which neither religion nor rule would survive. In her harsh, realistic opinion, financial failure eliminated the affection, respect, and obedience needed to sustain the state. Advisors who only looked to the past for inspiration lulled Philip into indifference, and it broke her heart to see his diffidence.[25] People harmed by Philip's failure to pay his debts viewed all affairs with "justified resentment." In the popular view the provinces faced ruin from debt incurred as the result of a war fought to secure Spain's power.

Tax demands sharpened the disagreement. Honoring a system that relied on negotiations and bargaining had no place in royal public policy,

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[23] *Correspondance*, 1: 445. Philip to Margaret, 16 Mar. 1561.
[24] Ibid., 1: 476–481. Margaret to Philip, 5 May 1561.
[25] Ibid., 1: 495–509. Margaret to Philip, 16 July 1561.

and Philip's demands, increasingly thwarted by obstructionist behavior, heightened existing tensions. He forwarded fiscal demands, expecting approval by the estates. The bolder provincial estates, led by Brabant, seized the opportunity to remonstrate against Spanish policies. Philip regarded their criticism as rude, but Margaret saw it as normal. She understood the self-interest of each particular estate and wanted to manipulate them to achieve her own ends, ignoring wherever possible larger political issues. Tradition required unanimity in voting on taxes, and the representatives of the towns had no reservations about expressing their opinions and exacting concessions. The frankness of the third estate of Brabant did cause her distress. As governess, she took part in the estates of Brabant and had to hear the views of the pensionary of Brussels, who spoke for the towns and in blunt terms directly criticized the Spanish regime and described the dismal economic facts of 1561.[26]

While Margaret sympathized with the plight of the estates, she lamented the impertinence of the "commons" and feared the spread of their unruly behavior.[27] The third estate drew its power and privileges from success in urban economic and political life and wanted to impose its own judgment in fiscal affairs. All work with the provincial estates involved formalities, procedures, and delays infuriating to anyone eager for speed and efficiency in government. Yet it was preferable to calling an Estates General, which had even greater intricacies and offered the prospect of unlimited discussion of public affairs and the expression of unwelcome views. Margaret worried that involving so many leaders precluded achieving unity of purpose and invited confrontation and division.[28] Some of the financial woe was the result of deliberate obstruction as the estates slowed the pace of debating funding provisions. However, they were also responding to the shrinking economy and the consequences of the enormous debt owed by the crown and underwritten in the provinces. While she acknowledged their understanding of commercial affairs, Margaret had come to regard deputies representing the towns as incapable of grasping the complexity of general problems and thus prone to confusion. Her initial attachment to the commons at Ghent gave way to suspicion.[29]

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[26] Ibid., 1: 530–535. Margaret's report on negotiations with Brabant, 18 Oct. 1561, and *Correspondance*, 2: 10–18. Report on the response of the other estates, 19 Dec. 1561.

[27] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 183–187 and 192–193.

[28] *Correspondance*, 2: 239–251. Margaret to Philip, 13 June 1562. J. Brouwer, *Montigny, Afgezant der Nederlanden bij Philips II* (Amsterdam: 1941), 20–24.

[29] *Correspondance*, 1: 458–459. Margaret to Philip, 12 Apr. 1561.

2. *The Calvinist Challenge and the Conflict over Granvelle*

At court, a deep sense of unease accompanied the collapse of religious order and the growing failure of Catholic officials to respond.[30] Margaret disliked deviation from Catholicism, but came to be equally distressed by the monumental fury that Philip reserved for heresy. Quite early on, she established permanent procedures for acting against heresy. At the first report of a problem, she tried persuasion, asking local authorities to maintain orthodoxy. Any rebuff resulted in the appointment of commissioners sent to the area with specific legal powers and, wherever possible, a small detachment of troops. Commissions were a perfect political weapon to prod magistrates into action, for their activities were not defined by past practices and privileges and their short tenure limited hostile debate over their presence. Her reasoned approach differed greatly from that of the king, whose early responses also established his future policy. He sat in his study and fulminated, reissuing old orders to eradicate heresy and never adjusting his thinking to different circumstances. His anger grew fierce and he directed it at officers, such as the bishop of Tournai, who did not meet his expectations of attacking evil with zest and fervor. In contrast, magistrates who executed heretics received personal letters full of praise. Yet most of his remarks had a distant, aloof quality and he failed to participate in a system in which all significant matters had to be referred directly to him.[31]

The religious situation grew intense in areas that had been quiet since Margaret's arrival. Reports from the northern provinces complained of an attitude of religious liberty, something the local magistrates claimed as their right by treaty. The number of problems increased and individual accounts of popular religious activity indicated wide disorder. Margaret acknowledged a change in attitude among the people. Only soldiers could make the people chase away the Calvinists, but nothing would change their contemptuous attitude toward authority created by his policies. She begged Philip to stop paying heed to advisors who exaggerated his power and persuaded him to ignore the financial crisis and to disassociate it from religious disorder.[32] Later, he wrote to Margaret that after months of delay he was ready to propose a resolution to financial problems.

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[30] Pasquier de le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, C. Steen tr. (New York: 1989), 49–59; Guiccirdini, *Lettere*, 161–168.

[31] *Correspondance*, 1: 460–500. Exchange of letters between Philip and Margaret, 1561.

[32] Ibid., 1: 476–478. Margaret to Philip, 5 May 1561; D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 87–88.

> First, as for the general destitution that all of your letters once again lead me back to so vividly, along with the plight in which everything finds itself and the dangers into which one could tumble for want of provision, I have continually searched and pondered over a remedy and assistance that I could provide from over here, and on this point I have reached a resolution and will inform you of it.[33]

However, days turned into weeks and he revealed no plan. Margaret engaged in a frenzy of embroidery as she was left trapped in a recurring cycle of religious and fiscal problems that became acute in Tournai, Brabant, and Flanders, but also appeared in virtually every quarter. Margaret also noted that in matters of religion precise distinctions were easy for distant Philip, difficult for her in Brussels, and almost impossible for magistrates on the scene.

The lack of definition of the new religion joined with the hazy practices of Catholicism made sure judgment impossible. She did decry the defiant singing of psalms and insulting of churchmen in Valenciennes and Tournai, noting with particular fury the habit of magistrates of both cities to report such episodes only if someone else had already informed the court. She longed for the power to crush such demonstrations and to bring the people to heel.[34]

However, Margaret moderated her tone when relaying the information to Philip.

> I fear that Your Majesty would be upset at not knowing of the state of affairs in these parts, for partial news might travel from here to there about recent events in Tournai and Valenciennes (…). And so that Your Majesty may grasp most particularly the change that we are beginning to sense, I had, on the third of this month, news that in the town of Tournai, around eight at night, a number of people assembled with a French preacher who presented a sermon in the middle of the marketplace, and from there they went forth in a procession eight abreast through various places in the town singing the Psalms of David in French in the style of Calvin, and extinguishing the torches and candles of those they encountered to prevent being recognized; and arriving at the residence of the vicar of the Bishop of Tournai, they shouted several slogans, words and ignominious blasphemies; and this went on for three days.[35]

The same situation troubled parts of the north, and local magistrates hindered investigations.[36] Too much freedom generated "depraved opinions,"

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[33] *Correspondance*, 1: 489. Philip to Margaret, 15 June 1561.
[34] Ibid., 1: 479–480. Margaret to Philip, 5 May 1561.
[35] Ibid., 1: 531–536. Margaret to Philip, 12 Oct. 1561.
[36] Ibid., 1: 531 and 536. Margaret to Philip, 12 Oct. 1561.

creating what was to her a fertile garden of perverted belief and Margaret denounced those who had grown accustomed to unseemly criticism of ecclesiastics and magistrates.[37] Her orders in November 1561 for the Council of Flanders to stop Calvinism revealed greater distress. The "malevolent" Calvinists attracted followers through song and sermon, and even published books dedicated to the king, thus associating him with their "damnable opinions." Their efforts had a seductive, crazy appeal, spreading discord and alienating people from church and king.[38]

Despite her taking fright at Calvinist popularity Margaret had to be a realist. Her meager garrisons failed to make those who wished to dabble in innovation fearful. Nor could she change magistrates who felt free to debate every point with her commissioners, equivocating whenever ordered to do something about the "disease and conspiracy" in their midst.[39] The spread of heresy in Flanders at the end of 1561 was beyond her control even though commissioners applied themselves with vigor, executing several people and imprisoning others. Thirty-three Anabaptists suffered imprisonment in Bruges, but that did little to deter the Calvinists who visited the villages of the province. Some towns remained firmly orthodox, but it was the result of local feelings and efforts and did not stem from the presence of the new bishops or the labors of the inquisitor Titlemans. The new bishops, most of whom were in place in 1562, had little effect on Calvinism and continued to attract the opposition of even loyal Catholics. Commissioners had better success, but they simply imposed the conditions and behavior of the past to preserve order and their version of the public good.[40]

In uncontrolled areas, disorder took on frightening proportions. Rural monasteries became objects of abuse, at first verbal, but quickly physical. Several alarms spread through the countryside as Calvinists moved about preaching and singing psalms in the villages. The participants claimed to visit villages only to discuss the prevailing lifestyle, but they often found receptive minds and immediately held services. Two preachers from Tournai organized the efforts in Flanders. Margaret hated the evidence

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[37] *Briefwisseling*, 36. Margaret to Megen.

[38] *Correspondance*, 1: 547. Margaret had ordered the magistrates to demand silence on issues that could inspire debate.

[39] E. de Coussemaker, *Documents relatifs à la Flandre maritime* (Bruges: 1876), 2: 70–71. Margaret to the Council of Flanders, 4 Nov. 1561.

[40] C. Paillard, *Histoire des troubles à Valenciennes, 1566–1567*, 4 vols. (Brussels: 1874–1876), 2: 39–78. Letters of Margaret, Philip II, Berghes, and the Magistrates of Valenciennes, 15 Oct.–23 Dec. 1561.

of changing faith, but she recognized the complexity of the issue, which involved continued corruption within Catholicism and growing economic distress. She noted that the magistrates of Valenciennes sought to dampen the ardor of the new Calvinists by increasing the manufacture of cloth.[41]

Uneasy about public affairs and incapable of swift or decisive action on her own initiative, she tried to achieve harmony through compromise. All orders and interpretation of policy required some consultation in the Council of State and Margaret made it the center of her efforts. It met in her apartments in the palace and she made valiant efforts to direct the discussion, during which the members expressed their opinions in blunt terms. There was also the prospect that its members could demand the convocation of the entire Order of the Golden Fleece on major issues. When the king proposed interfering in the religious turmoil of France, the members of the Order called his policies both dangerous and unreasonable.[42] While Granvelle kept himself informed of these discussions, he left it to Margaret to report such distasteful things to Philip. Most bad news traveled to Madrid in Margaret's dispatches, which provided ample evidence, in Philip's view, of aristocratic lack of respect and obedience. She thought that he missed the point and tried to convince him of the great danger facing the Netherlands.[43]

The deadlock left the government unfunded. Unpaid bands of soldiers raised to garrison frontier towns and to curb Calvinism initiated a series of mutinies that began in 1561 in Hesdin in the Pas-de-Calais. Officials at court received no salary; normal government functions suffered occasional suspension; and public works stopped. The dilemma made Margaret anxious about preserving order, knowing that her inability to respond to the least challenge had become common knowledge. Lawlessness and poverty plagued the provinces, and Brussels could offer no relief. Her regency had many duties and no resources, and those most loyal to her enjoyed the least prospect of being rewarded. Flatterers and sycophants who only sought fortune and place vanished from court. The loss of respect and erosion of prestige endowed her government with little credit. In a sorry contest, Margaret would ask provincial and city governments to fund

[41] EA 281, fo. 1–9, 1–30 Jan. 1562. Letters of Margaret and the Commission in Flanders, the Council of Flanders, magistrates of Antwerp and local officials, 1–30 Jan. 1562; Paillard, *Valenciennes*, 2: 91–101. Letters of Berghes and the magistrates of Valenciennes to Margaret, 3 Feb. 1562; *Correspondance*, 2: 88. Margaret to Philip, 15 Feb. 1562.

[42] Ibid., 2: 1–9. Margaret to Philip, 19 Dec. 1561.

[43] Ibid., 2: 10–11. Margaret to Philip, 19 Feb. 1562.

troops and they would respond with petitions to disband the forces. When Margaret requested aid from Philip, his delays and dissimulation rivaled those of the most obdurate provincial estate. He would frequently defer responding because of church feast days, with Easter occupying a month. Affairs of the utmost importance languished because of royal inattention and Margaret became openly distressed, sometimes abandoning her usual measured demeanor during melodramatic outbursts.[44]

For years she petitioned him in unchanging language, with impending fiscal disaster joined with gloomy reports on religious and governmental affairs. She unhappily acknowledged the contrast between the world as Philip would have it and the actual state of affairs, in which disputes began to foster factions. Philip ignored her alarm but still felt free to give orders and advice, including precise and cruel details on how to execute people for heresy. Irritated that Calvinists sang psalms while being burned alive, Philip ordered them gagged or, even better, that a large ball be stuffed in their mouths, something he had seen in England, where he attended a number of executions as the consort of Mary I.[45] Margaret responded in a personal letter in Italian, the only method at her disposal in Brussels of preventing Granvelle's creatures from reading her messages. She ignored Philip's remarks on making executions more degrading and expressed grave fears that only troops could maintain order in places where Calvinists became abrasive. A very real possibility existed of outbursts against judicial and political authority because many officers no longer fulfilled their duties, partly because of fiscal disorder. Philip did respond to that report and sent her 100,000 *écus* in 1562. Had he not, her government would have stopped, for she could not even get credit from merchants in Brussels, previously a reliable source. He had to realize, she wrote, the anger of the merchants who could lose everything because of his existing debts.[46]

Margaret also fretted over the interference of Spain in the relationship of the Netherlands with other lands. She was well aware of the dangers facing peace and commerce. The Brussels court had its own traditions in diplomatic affairs and Margaret, to her delight, had authority to negotiate trade agreements and to maintain a small number of ambassadors. For her, the most important contacts were with the Imperial, French, and

[44] Ibid., 2: 150–169. Margaret to Philip, 21 Mar. 1562.
[45] Ibid., 2: 352–356. Philip to Margaret, 9 Oct. 1562.
[46] Ibid., 2: 357–376. Margaret to Philip, 10 and 16 Oct. 1562.

English courts. Thomas Chantonay, a relative of Granvelle, served in Paris and gave Margaret sporadic but correct information on the gradual drift of France toward religious war. Later, he represented her at the Imperial court in Vienna. All her ambassadors had limited powers yet they provided a means of direct communication and a source of independent information. Margaret maintained correspondence with some Spanish ambassadors and especially with Alvaro de la Prado, Bishop of Aquilea and ambassador in London, but she could only seek information and could never offer it, even though her background gave her excellent insight into the dangerous issues of the day.[47] Keenly aware of the international character of the movements associated with the reformation, Margaret wanted more information about events in other lands. She worried about the spread of religious war and hoped that the sessions of the Council of Trent would address the divisive issues raised by the Reformation. Margaret recognized the difficulties of restoring traditional religious order. She herself feared that the Protestant groups might attend the council and threaten what little peace remained in the church. However, the prospect that they might be prevented from attending agitated her equally, for they might turn to forming leagues and further divide the Christian world.[48]

Her firm views on the dangers posed by religious disorder put her in the peculiar position of having to negotiate with the king to change policies in foreign affairs that she regarded as harmful to the Netherlands. For his part the king mingled freely in the affairs of her court and embroiled her in his policies without her knowledge. In one instance he gave a secret mission to one of Margaret's secretaries when he traveled from Madrid to Brussels by way of France. As Nicholas Courtewille, Sieur de Hodicq journeyed through the French realm, Philip ordered him to assess the dangers of the decaying situation, to identify Catholic groups he could support, and to weigh reaction to his declaration that if Catherine de' Medici did not accept his help in redressing religious abuses, he would assist the first person who requested aid. He ordered Courtewille to try to induce some positive response if none already existed. The king wanted him to continue his investigations in the Netherlands, secretly determining if any people might respond to changes emanating from France. The cautious Courtewille produced a report reinforcing previously held assumptions

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[47] EA. 189–190 and 399–400. Correspondence with Chatonay in Paris and Prado in London.

[48] *Correspondance*, 1: 402–406 and 527–529. Letters of Margaret to Philip, 6 Feb. and 12 Oct. 1561.

about the dangers of the French situation, but offering no Catholic party for Spain to support. He also prepared a safe, neutral assessment of affairs in the Netherlands.[49]

None of Courtewille's activities surprised Margaret, who knew about the mission from Chantonnay's reports to her. The unhappy condition of the French realm was a constant source of worry, but she felt equally uneasy about the royal project for involvement. It was no secret that heresy surrounded the provinces and that commerce helped its spread since merchants took a dim view of interfering with trade merely for the interests of ideology.[50] In contrast, Philip's sense of duty governed his view of commercial and diplomatic affairs. His efforts in France showed Margaret how remote Philip was from reality. In his opinion, he had to give other governments time to reestablish religious orthodoxy, but if the French monarchy and the German states did not act, he would. With his unique logic, Philip explained to Margaret that the religious fire raging in France represented an attack on its crown. Since God held him accountable for governance throughout Christendom, he had to protect all crowns and the public good. He modestly claimed that he had the duty, without covetousness or ambition, to ensure the authority of the king of France. Subsequently, in the spring of 1562, he ordered Margaret to raise 2000 cavalry for use in France and to have her diplomatic agents counter his detractors, who made such a bother in Christendom, by saying that he acted only to cut off the hydra head of rebellion.[51]

The orders from Madrid received a cold welcome; Margaret had no need to seek conflict elsewhere since she had an abundance of it in her own charge. She could barely guarantee order, pay her few soldiers, and maintain the fortifications under her command.[52] Thus she ignored his command and dispatched Montigny, first to France to examine the state of affairs there, and then to Spain to dissuade the king from any involvement in any new venture, no matter how saintly his intentions.[53] Montigny made the six month commitment to go to Madrid to explain Margaret's worries and aristocratic opposition to Granvelle, but to no avail. The mission to encourage Philip to change his attitude failed, and

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[49] *Papiers d'État du cardinal de Granvelle*, 9 vols., C. Weiss ed., (Paris: 1841–1852), 6: 432–443.

[50] *Correspondance*, 2: 146–149 and 192–205. Margaret to Philip, 20 Mar. and 8 May 1562.

[51] Ibid., 2: 218–228. Philip to Margaret, 8 June 1562.

[52] Ibid., 2: 239–251. Margaret to Philip, 13 June 1562.

[53] Ibid., 2: 240.

he returned from Spain in December 1562 without having accomplished anything, his time wasted during a critical period in Tournai, his governorship. Thus Margaret had to begin to act on her own initiative. Margaret and the Council of State thwarted Philip's orders on France and he rebuked them for forgetting their duty. Margaret's response illustrated the precarious nature of her position. To her, his orders lacked an awareness of the reality of the diplomatic situation and would result in clashes with English, German, and French forces on one side and an amazed and angry populace on the other.[54] Wary and alert to danger and without personal authority to make policy, she viewed Philip's ideas about international relations with detachment and candor. Private reservations about the religious and political changes in other lands had to be balanced by the consequences of aggressive intervention. France, where religious factions attracted many of her subjects who wished to indulge in similar "depravity," had to be watched, not attacked.[55] Philip claimed to appreciate her views, but never let them affect his policies.

Philip as usual advocated a pitiless attack on "sectarians, thieves and brigands", Calvinist perpetrators who fouled whatever they touched and showed no respect for images.[56] Throughout the provinces the Calvinists began to organize into stronger units and to become more audacious in their activities.[57] His ordinances called for exterminating them through violent acts that, although legal, bordered on the monstrous.[58] In 1562 The Calvinists established a confession of faith, increased their ties to Geneva, and became more audacious. In Tournai, they petitioned all authorities, including the king, boldly asking them to cease resisting the word of God.[59] The regent reacted with a threat to the magistrates, telling them to make the good feel secure and the bad terror, or else they would experience royal wrath personally. However, the king remained far away and the magistrates had to deal with a nocturnal appearance of armed Calvinists in the marketplace. In Valenciennes the city watch carefully kept its distance while a Calvinist band went to the city prison and sang psalms,

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[54] .Ibid., 2: 281–284, 295–296, and 298–306. Letters of Margaret and Philip 8 July, 4 and 8 Aug. 1562.

[55] Ibid., 2: 357–376. Margaret to Philip, 16 Oct. 1562.

[56] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 89–90.

[57] *Correspondance*, 2: 181–186 and 192–205. Letters of Margaret to Philip, 18 Apr. and 8 May, 1562.

[58] Ibid., 2: 193.

[59] EA 352, fo. 49–54. Correspondence of Margaret and reports of the *baillage* officers in Tournai, 19–24 Sept. 1562.

with some of the prisoners joining them. They withdrew when it began to rain, but left a message cautioning the magistrates against hurting the prisoners. The message contained numerous scriptural references, which its authors cited as the texts that gave them courage to live in an idolatrous world.

The fact that the message had sixty-one grammatical errors brought Margaret no comfort; she saw in it an evil nature with no respect for authority and justice, and she told the magistrates to execute a prisoner to prove that they could do it. From court, Guicciardini recounted the subsequent events to Cosimo de Medici in Florence: "... in Valenciennes two of those Huguenots (as in my opinion all of that sect should be called) were captured and found guilty and very obstinate and with little ado condemned to be burned publicly." He then related that the magistrates gathered a guard of sixty men, but unhappily a large crowd, reportedly people of poor quality, stormed the prison and released the condemned prisoners. Then they ripped up the stakes and threw away the wood to be used in the execution. As the crowd dispersed, its members taunted Catholics, who reacted with fear and, in private, harsh words. In response, the magistrates ordered everyone to return home and rearranged the stakes and wood, but only after giving the Calvinists sufficient time to remove the chains of the prisoners, offer several prayers of thanks for the success of their venture, and then withdraw in good order.[60] The fiasco compelled Margaret to continue a policy of appeasement because magistrates were governed by their fear of Calvinist responses to any enforcement of the placards.[61]

She dreaded the hardening of positions that could be a prelude to civil war and sought to find a way to calm the situation even as the Calvinists became more audacious and the inquisitor Titelmans troubled affairs by increasing his activities. Throughout the difficult months of 1562, Margaret, firm in her sense of proper judicial procedures, never rushed to violence. Accusations against heretics had to be specific, individual, provable, and reasonable, and she discounted guilt by association. In her opinion, suspects should be interned, interrogated, and instructed in the Catholic faith. Only the ardent should suffer the harsh penalties of the placards. However, her moderate approach earned her no following and she was shocked and unnerved by conflicts in the countryside

[60] Ibid., fo. 57–60 and 62. Report on the Council of Religion in Tournai, Oct. 1562.
[61] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 172.

near Tournai. Subversive and elusive, the Calvinists had the capacity to make the government appear ridiculous. The Lord of Moulbais, the commander of Tournai's citadel, and a detachment of his garrison soldiers interrupted a conventicle near the city and captured some participants, only to have them rescued by lightly armed but determined fellow Calvinists. Moulbais had pressed local residents into the task of conducting the prisoners to Tournai and they refused to make a stand. The villagers and the official who accompanied them claimed that they recognized none of those involved, thus relying on the convenient myth of Calvinists as strangers. To do otherwise would be to invite neighbors to testify against one another, a situation still viewed with distaste in 1562.

Two prisoners who were detained separately had previously been summoned and banished as Calvinists and faced charges of recidivism. Guilt, a foregone conclusion, carried the automatic penalty of swift execution in public at the place where the conventicle had occurred. Margaret hoped to make a spectacle of the affair, but recognized that traditional justice had to retreat before the multitude of Calvinists in the Tournaisis. Thus the magistrates executed the two at night in prison and tried to cart their corpses to the fields for display. Even that did not proceed as planned when a crowd stopped the cart and carried away the bodies for burial according to Calvinist rites.[62] None of the magistrates expressed surprise; previous executions had been unpleasant exercises in brutality, with botched and clumsy efforts at killing causing hostile crowds to curse the proceedings openly.[63]

The affairs of Tournai and Valenciennes represented only the most dramatic of the problems facing Margaret in 1562. Heresy mingled freely with the other issues as finances fell into grave disorder and the contest over Granvelle and the objectives of Spanish rule continued. Money remained a key issue and Margaret had already reiterated her cry to the king: "In the Name of God! If only Your Majesty would bother to consider and provide for things as is proper: . . . if you do not understand and act as is necessary, and quickly, it will be difficult to keep things from falling into some huge and irreparable quandary".[64] To make matters worse, an enormous storm swept over the Netherlands in June 1562, sending seawater over the dikes, ruining canals, and drowning scores of people. Destroyed fields

[62] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 97–99.
[63] *Correspondance*, 2: 255–258. Resolution of the Council of State, 13 June 1562.
[64] EA 352, fo. 49–54. Letters of Margaret and reports of *baillage* officials in Tournai, 19–24 Sept. 1562.

and wrecked cities increased want and unemployment, giving Margaret, who had no funds to provide relief, an even greater cause for anxiety and stress.[65]

Granvelle, in the midst of the troubles, heightened religious tensions by directing all priests to reform themselves, to fulfill their tasks in services and sermons, to police their parishes, and to keep a registry of all inhabitants.[66] No one had any enthusiasm for the proposed reforms in life and rule that were only weak imitations of Calvinist practices. Granvelle thereby showed the same lack of understanding as the king who suddenly expressed outrage over the Calvinists acting in broad daylight. Margaret had long before informed him of the dismal condition of religious affairs, particularly in Valenciennes, but he professed shock on learning that people of every condition participated, and he wanted to oust the magistrates. Only godly men concerned for the commonwealth and the public good, by which he meant fervent Catholics, should have power. In a personal note, Philip ordered new magistrates to punish swiftly and harshly, for in dealing with evil, power came only from inflicting pain.[67]

The Brussels court did not rejoice at news of Calvinist activity, but sensitivity to the course of events in France moderated its support for horrific executions. Personally, Margaret preferred efforts to cajole and coerce people. While she hated attacks on the church, the churchmen in Valenciennes and Tournai embarrassed her. The priests had scarcely any education and most lived not as incumbents but as mere hirelings because the benefices of the city had long been alienated. In her view, the commonwealth and the church had to be restored simultaneously.[68] Margaret wanted conformity, not retribution, and her orders often moderated harsh sentences. The inquisitor Titelmans openly condemned her soft approach, regarding it as culpable weakness. He and his staff acted in the unprotected villages of Flanders with enthusiasm. Confiscations, banishments, torture, and executions continued unabated where he resided, for no privileged magistrates could cover the rural residents with the cloak of legal protection.[69]

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[65] *BCRH*, 12: 87–88. Ordinance of Tournai, 28 Sept. 1562.
[66] *Correspondance*, 2: 88. Margaret to Philip, 15 Feb. 1562.
[67] Ibid., 1: 53–60. Margaret to Philip, 22 July 1562.
[68] Ibid., 1: 258.
[69] Paillard, *Valenciennes*, 2: 308–369. Correspondence between Margaret, Berghes, and the Commission, June 1562; *Correspondance*, 2: 262–263. Letter of Philip II to Margaret, 1 July 1562.

The contest between Calvinists and forces loyal to the regime heated up during October 1562. In Flanders a daring mid-day sermon designed to challenge the magistrates resulted in the arrest of over two hundred people. Margaret dispatched a special commission composed of men from her own governing circle to interrogate the prisoners. Nearer Tournai, officials interrupted a Calvinist conventicle and captured twenty-three participants, but a large crowd of townspeople surrounded the entire group, rescuing all but four prisoners. In the north, Groningen also experienced confrontation, but in that case Catholics attacked conventicles and assemblies. In contrast, a hard-pressed priest in Deventer had to take refuge with the magistrates after an encounter with local Calvinists. The bad harvest in the fall of 1562 made the news more depressing, as shortages in the markets made Margaret fear the forthcoming long winter.[70]

In Valenciennes priests hardly showed themselves and their churches stood empty. She feared that both rich and poor had become cautious heretics protected by laws and privileges.[71] Yet even when she was able to exercise control, she remained loath to carry out the placards uniformly. Among the prisoners her agents interrogated, a few "dogmatizers" enlivened the proceedings, but the others attended sermons out of simple curiosity and instantly repented when confronted with torture and the prospect of a hideous death. Acting against both groups equally seemed unjust, yet her governors were driven to distraction by the impact of Calvinism on local affairs. Berghes, governor of Valenciennes, proclaimed his inability to act in a city where the magistrates told him nothing while the local preacher knew everything.[72] Margaret saw the psalm singing and sermons as a threat to economic and social discipline. Convinced that Calvinism encouraged confusion and threatened the rich, she thought the bourgeoisie should tremble at sermons. However, Margaret saw only the visible evidence of the Calvinist community in 1562, when youths roamed the streets of towns singing psalms and cursing churchmen, and when flocks of people walked out to the countryside to hear sermons. The wealthy and powerful did not openly indulge in these activities at that time and only their contempt for Catholicism provided evidence of changed faith.

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[70] Ibid., 2: 369–418. Correspondence between Margaret and the Commission in Valenciennes, 1–8 July 1562.

[71] *Briefwisseling*, 57–67. Letters of Margaret and Megen, May–June 1562.

[72] F. Rachfahl, *Margaretha von Parma* (Munich: 1898), 85–93.

Early in 1563 religious issues and the imminent bankruptcy of the regime competed for attention. Government credibility depended on meeting financial obligations and preserving religious order. Margaret wished to protect the orthodox from the new wave of reformers, whom she deemed wicked. She depended on the governors in the provinces and the commanders of garrisons to maintain order, although the policy had weaknesses. Berghes caustically pointed out that she required decisive action in unpopular situations from the governors while practicing appeasement at court. He served her without the open dislike of other aristocrats, but he valued his own reputation and wanted the governors to participate in setting policy.[73] Berghe's rude remarks were honest, and Margaret's authority in Brussels remained weak. At court, only her Italian retinue remained consistently loyal and sympathetic, decrying heresy and contemptuous aristocrats alike.[74] However, her entourage could not remedy the increasingly difficult relations with the leaders of the Golden Fleece. Part of the problem arose from financial distress. Margaret had to face embarrassing and dangerous fiscal problems when Philip limited pensions paid to members of the Golden Fleece.[75] Only loyal aristocrats deserved funds in his opinion, even though all of them had to fulfill social and political functions. In contrast, Margaret had to deal with petitions from aristocrats who became hard pressed to pay the maintenance necessary for their positions. Hoorn had the task of governing Ghent, but Philip wanted to deny him the control of eighteen villages in the area that had traditionally furnished the governor with funds and supplies.[76]

The Calvinist challenge and financial failure were not the only currents of change in public life. The fortunes of Granvelle declined steadily during 1563. He asked Philip to bring him to Spain, but the king followed his usual policy of equivocation and inaction. No single event marked his loss of power; rather, he had isolated himself through his words and acts and became ineffective. Margaret had gradually moved from feelings of admiration and friendship to coldness and suspicion. She had counted on Granvelle to help her find a suitable wife for Alexander, and his lukewarm efforts to pair him with the Viennese Hapsburgs caused the first rupture.

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[73] EA 352, fo. 49–54. Letters of Margaret and reports from Tournai.

[74] Paillard, *Valenciennes.* 2: 477–497. Letters of Margaret, the provost, and Berghes, 8–12 Dec. 1562.

[75] Paillard, *Valenciennes*, 3: 246–312. Correspondence between Berghes and Margaret, May 1563.

[76] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 209–213.

Granvelle's unwillingness to think that Margaret had been instrumental in obtaining his appointment as cardinal also diminished him in her eyes.[77] Nor had he helped in getting Philip to restore Piacenza to Ottavio, who came to Brussels in March 1563 to press the matter. Granvelle's bland assurances that all would be well made Ottavio deeply suspicious of him, and that feeling quickly spread to Margaret. She worried that Granvelle sought to wreck her administration, bringing her down with it. As the opposition to the members of the Order hardened, she increasingly associated herself with them.[78] Her correspondence with Philip began to display warmth for the opinions of the great aristocrats, and that came at an opportune moment since Orange welcomed her support and offered his own to her. Thus the cardinal's distress opened up the prospect of having her own government for the first time, one based on cooperation and concord as she mended the rifts occasioned by Granvelle. She sent a personal message through Tomàs Armenteros, now her confidant rather than Granvelle's. All problems had joined together, and she wanted Philip to know that she could not be an effective regent with Granvelle and with the diminished status that the continued Spanish occupation of Piacenza caused her. If the issues could not be resolved satisfactorily, Margaret wanted Philip to dismiss her.

Her efforts and new attitude revealed Granvelle's weakness, for in practice, he had no better access to authority and public funds than Margaret did and his opponents commanded far greater respect. On becoming cardinal and head of the church in the Netherlands, he assumed that his place was greater than that of the members of the Order, and he usurped Orange's seat when he attended the Council of State. Led by Orange and Egmont, the great aristocrats vented their fury in public displays of disdain and in private agreements to seek Granvelle's dismissal. Orange, whose prestige was enormous, gave force to the opposition by withdrawing from the Council of State in 1563. Unlike Granvelle, the prince had infinite political credit in the provinces and abroad.[79] Like the king, Granvelle regarded such independence as inimical to proper rule and he warred tirelessly against Orange and others who failed to meet his standards of submission and faith. Granvelle hated the aristocracy's habit of debating

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[77] *Correspondance . . . Guillaume d'Orange*, 2: 42–47. 29 July 1563; EA 352, fo. 95–108. Correspondence between Margaret and Montigny, July–Aug. 1563; Paillard, *Valenciennes*, 3: 313–383. Correspondence between Margaret and Berghes, July 1563.

[78] Van der Lem, Anton. *De Opstand in de Nederlanden* (Amsterdan: 1995), 41–60.

[79] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 216–219.

every issue and preserving independence and privileges, for he believed public affairs had become too complicated for that and required decisive direction by a person such as himself. Indeed, he criticized Berghes most sharply for his desire to solve problems through discussion in the estates.[80] The Golden Fleece thus acted to protect its own interests, but it was at the head of a popular opposition movement when it petitioned the king to remove the cardinal. Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn warned the king that Granvelle's position and powers prevented them from the proper discharge of their own duties and they would withdraw from the government if he remained. In sharp contrast to Granvelle's ideas, they stated that a minister's powers wrecked public business and spread confusion and disorder.[81]

Philip had parried Margaret's message and the request of the Golden Fleece by asking for a representative to present their views personally, and Margaret had made that one of the duties of Montigny on his long trip to Spain. The king had disliked the aristocratic character of Montigny's protests over Granvelle and had not allowed him to return with a resolution of the issue. Philip subsequently sent his decision back with Tomàs Armenteros, itself a disquieting gesture. In Brussels, the conflict continued because of Philip's secrecy and caused general paralysis in the government throughout the fall of 1563. Orange and Egmont met privately with Margaret, but remained firm in refusing to sit on the Council of State. Far worse for Margaret, she heard that Christine of Lorraine was again being considered for the regency. Margaret felt isolated for weeks on end and Philip's inaction troubled her deeply. She felt that the irresolute royal response at such a serious moment caused wholesale damage to authority. So she sat in meetings of the Council of State working feverishly on her embroidery and ignoring the empty seats of the members of the Order.[82]

By December, rumors of the cardinal's departure circulated as opposition became more open.[83] Someone placed a "For Sale" sign on Granvelle's palace and others plastered the walls of Brussels with insulting posters and epigrams. Margaret longed for the return of the great lords, for the business of government had stopped cold. In Madrid, the problem created anger and the initiative in Philips's councils passed increasingly to the Duke of Alva, who helped to draft the response carried back

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[80] Ibid., 220–221.
[81] Van Durme, *El Cardinal Granvella*, 231–240.
[82] *Correspondance . . . Guillaume d'Orange*, 2: 47–50.
[83] Iongh, *Madama*, 278–279.

by Armenteros.[84] Granvelle remained in Malines or in Brussels, but had much less presence in the government. Even before final word of his dismissal arrived, Orange and Egmont celebrated his fall. While Margaret did not join in rejoicing, she did begin to offer the great lords direct support, doing everything possible to bring them into the center of government and defending their lack of warmth in persecuting heresy. All of her experience in Italy made her loath to adopt hard stances when dealing with people whose support she needed. She sought to revive the tradition of live and let live in the Netherlands, unaware of the opposite attitude being adopted in the Spanish councils.

Margaret had a brilliant opportunity, for her appearance, her love of pomp, and her determination to rule in accord with tradition might have helped to create harmony once Granvelle was gone. However, it was her awful fate to serve a hard, indecisive king who espoused power and religious bigotry with equal passion. Granvelle still remained a presence even though deprived of any visible support, and everything had to await Armenteros's return. The celebration of Carnival took on a boisterous, satiric tone, with one large group of mummers dressed in the liveries of all of the cardinal's enemies. The mummers were accompanied by the most important aristocrats, who dressed in simple, dark clothing and a fool's cap. The garments of that protest became the uniform of the Protestants a few weeks later. The street theater thus took on permanent political and religious overtones and Margaret's desire to avoid all scandal was drowned out in the enthusiasm of the crowd at Carnival. Orange and Egmont understood popular sentiment perfectly, but they discounted Margaret's discomfort and the attitude of the king toward such demonstrations.[85]

Late in February 1564, Armenteros made his way back to Brussels. He carried a variety of letters that again demonstrated the unhappy combination of indecision, cunning, and anger in the personality of the king. The official letters removed Granvelle with formal language, but letters to others at court, such as Gonzalo Perez, were filled with royal anger over Philip's thwarted policies. The great lords had not acted as proper vassals, and Philip ordered Egmont to Madrid to explain their actions. The primary objective had been attained and when Granvelle asked for leave to visit his sick mother Margaret seized on that happy fiction to cover him

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[84] P.C. Hooft, *Nederlandse historien* (Antwerp: 1978), 20–24.

[85] Henry Kamen, *The Duke of Alba* (New Haven: 2004), 52; W. Maltby, *Alba* (Berkeley, 1983), 124; J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: 1996), 140 and 145.

with extravagant praise and bid him farewell. Viglius, his admirer, decried the celebrations:

> After the Cardinal departed, those who had been jealous of him became jubilant, acting like schoolboys in the absence of the teacher. Even the duchess was persuaded that she had been delivered from bondage, since previously she had undertaken nothing of importance without the participation of the council and the advice of the cardinal.[86]

Philip also resented the loss of a close ally and valuable servant. Royal policy did not change in the least, nor did Granvelle's clients and informants depart with him.[87] Margaret made sure that what she called the last act of the comedy was played out in grand style as she furnished his carts and litters with lavish trappings and he left with public honors.

The effect in Brussels was immediate. Margaret suddenly realized a greater level of control and ceased fearing that her political position had no more substance than a shadow. The leading members of the Order also enjoyed considerably enhanced power, which caused Viglius, to complain that they sought to establish a new commonwealth controlled by the Council of State.[88] However, the restored prestige of the Council of State did not ease any fundamental conflicts. During the venomous bickering over Granvelle, serious troubles had developed, including a prison break in Rupelmonde and riots in Antwerp, and local authorities grew increasingly timid.[89] The provincial estates, led by Brabant and Flanders, continued to delay revenue requests or to grant them only conditionally. The king's 1559 request finally met with grudging approval in 1564. Nor did church order improve.[90] The new bishops were in their dioceses, but the transformation of religious life did not follow. Granvelle had provided a target for dislike of the Spanish regime, but his departure did not remove the basic problems and Margaret quickly moved from feelings of pleasure to those of despair. Her confidant Marchi wrote that Margaret increasingly spoke of the peace of Italy, contrasting it with the stress of Brussels where heresy and financial distress tormented her.[91]

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86 Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 222–230; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 190–192.
87 Viglius, *Mémoires*, 1: 170
88 Marchi, *Cento Lettere*, 15–18; Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London: 1977).
89 Viglius, *Mémoires*, 1: 172.
90 *Correspondance*, 2: 498. Margaret to Philip, 14 Mar. 1563.
91 Marchi, *Cento Lettere*, 20–25.

The lack of funds slowed all public business and a spirit of gloom settled over the court. Maximilian Morillon, Granvelle's vicar-general for the archdioceses of Malines and the new confident of the cardinal, remained at court and delighted in telling him of Margaret's difficulties.[92] Financial distress dominated while Philip dismissed all pleas for financial support. Gaspar Schetz, who managed finance for Margaret, instituted inventive financial provisions. He introduced a scheme based on loans and anticipations of revenue that represented a sharp departure from the normal practices. However, the antiquated and disorderly revenue system, one in which the agents in the provinces responded to the sophisticated financial statements of Schetz with vague reckonings using Roman numerals, rendered his efforts absurd. The estates of each province established an exact term for each tax and they bickered and bargained at each renewal. They demonstrated skill in negotiations over the *court*, the special levy to supply the garrisons, for they knew how the regime feared unpaid troops. Soldiers thus became pawns in a cynical political chess match. Even the revenues from taxes being debated had been anticipated, auctioned off by Schetz at a fraction of their real value.[93]

Margaret's warnings to Philip in the period became blunt. She regarded herself as neither negligent nor timid and told him that he ran the danger of losing the provinces: "It grieves me so much that my government might lose power, and even that Your Majesty could sustain losses that, no matter what efforts, would ever be recovered."[94] She herself received letters from Granvelle warning about vicious rumors including accusations of corruption that were circulating. In such circumstances Margaret knew that she had to temporize whenever a problem arose. The political opportunism of cities like Antwerp distressed her as its magistrates took advantage of the situation, deflecting her orders with remonstrances and petitions advancing wholly different concepts of governance. Margaret came to regard the magistrates of Antwerp as pernicious because of their desire to subject royal orders to review by the estates. In her opinion, magistrates

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92 Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 233–238.

93 D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 100–105. Letters describing the activities of Granvelle's supporters and opponents.

94 *Correspondance*, 2: 457–506. Letters of Margaret to Philip giving details of the financial distress, Feb.–Mar. 1563.

Ibid., 480. Margaret to Philip, 14 Mar. 1563, EA 352–354, Correspondence with Tournai, 1562–1564, and Paillard, *Valenciennes*, volumes 2 and 3 provide comprehensive reports on the military situation and the concerns of the governors for their soldiers.

sometimes lacked ideas appropriate to their own good and service to the crown, and she longed to make them reasonable and cooperative.[95] Previously she had wanted to force the cities to become Catholic versions of Geneva where force governed faith. However, the governors warned that only large garrisons, themselves ruinous to the communities, would insulate the cities from Calvinist disorder.[96]

Wanting the king to understand affairs fully, she had furnished Tomás Armenteros with a summary of her views and new plans to present to the king. Margaret likened Calvinism to an infection that spawned fear, manifest in a lack of fervor in enforcing placards. No one had the ardor and zeal to follow the placards with enthusiasm. In addition, the aristocracy did not assist with vigor.[97] Her original plan used oaths to isolate the Calvinists, but they simply swore to them indifferently, regarding everything as permissible. All pledged themselves to Catholicism, but churches stood empty on Sundays. Her new plan involved placing a sufficiently large force in troubled cities to make the Calvinists apprehensive. If the magistrates mounted a guard and participated in Catholic services, she would remove the garrison. The leading citizens would have to organize as a militia, considered indispensable to the maintenance of Catholicism.[98] In anticipating the willing collaboration of the wealthy citizens, Margaret held a naive view because she ignored their involvement in Calvinism and hostility to Spanish rule. The behavior of some agents of Spain made the situation even worse. Alonso del Canto, a representative of both the Spanish crown and the inquisition, came to Antwerp and on his own authority arrested a Frenchman for heresy. The storm over the arrest threatened to spread from Antwerp, forcing the Council of State to vacate the charges against the man and order his release, with attendant shame and dishonor. Margaret chided Philip for not remembering that when people suffered arrest in the Netherlands they had to be tried in accord with the laws of the provinces. She reminded him that the elaborate and sophisticated judicial procedures did not allow inquisitorial methods, and proof corroborated by witnesses remained necessary for conviction. Canto never

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[95] *Correspondance*, 2: 509–512. Letter of the magistrates of Antwerp to Philip II, 9 Jan. 1563; Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 100–116.

[96] EA 355, fo. 220. Montigny to Margaret, 29 June 1563, and Paillard, *Valenciennes*, 3: 313–383. Correspondence between Margaret and Berghes.

[97] *Correspondance*, 3: 46–56. Margaret's instruction for Thomas Armentieros, 11 Aug. 1563.

[98] Ibid., 3: 79–86. Margaret to Philip, 8 Sept. 1563.

offered proof to support his arrests, relying on the prospect of torture to inspire confessions.[99]

At the same time, criminal activity mingled with religious disorders. In Brabant gangs demanding money threatened some monasteries with the slogan "pay or burn". Pillage and larceny remained just a step away from direct attacks on Catholics and the beginning of iconoclasm. The magistrates of Tournai had to prohibit threats to burn Catholic churchmen in their homes and worse, and to investigate the stabbing of a Franciscan at the gates of the citadel. The Calvinist sympathizers who perpetrated such deeds often made no effort to hide, which alarmed the magistrates, who preferred to blame violence on anonymous "scurrilous louts".[100] The regent feared new reports of popular action and the constant threats posed by mobs who offered to meet opposition with a flurry of cobblestones, which she denounced as temerity, insolence and outrage.[101] During May 1563, Margaret reported her increased apprehension:

> . . . and it would be worse if the peasants mixed in the matter, and I hear that in order to attract them to sermons, the rich are making contributions to be divided among the poor, which is the same route they followed in France with such momentous consequences.[102]

Montigny sent her an ominous report of clashes at a sermon near Tournai when the provost attempted to interrupt it and the crowd cried out "kill the tyrant". Two or three thousand, possibly ten percent of the people, gathered at one of the gates in the hope of freeing the prisoners. Others vented their fury on a convent, where sixty youths grabbed the resident priest, stripped him, and threw him into a ditch. Worse might have happened in Tournai itself if the preacher had not called for calm. In departing from their vigil at the gates, some of the Calvinists left a message threatening to match any garrison placed in the city with twice the number of armed men. Montigny wrote of fear and confusion among the magistrates, none of whom had dared to leave their homes.[103] Calm returned when Margaret dispatched a new commission. Only then did the

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[99] Ibid., 3: 152–155. Margaret to Philip, 12 Nov. 1563.

[100] EA 352, fo. 94. Margaret to Montigny, 10 Jan. 1563; *BCRH* 12: 89–91. Ordinances of Tournai, 26–27 Jan. 1563.

[101] *Correspondance*, 2: 477–497. Margaret to Philip, including a copy of her instruction for Montigny, 14 Mar. 1563. Quotation from p. 489.

[102] Ibid., 2: 515. Margaret to Philip, 9 May 1563.

[103] Ibid., 2: 521–524. Letter of Montigny to Margaret, 4 May 1563.

dreary business of interrogation, torture, and execution recur in the city. Calvinism retreated, but its opponents did not triumph.[104]

The problems infuriated Philip. Nothing in the Netherlands pleased him, but the "dissolute and indecent" behavior of Valenciennes and Tournai truly angered him. In his opinion, kindness toward people there only made them insolent, so he formally ordered Margaret to chastise, reprimand, and rip out the root of evil. In a departure from his customary behavior, Philip even sent her 100,000 florins to facilitate the task.[105] As a first step, Margaret ordered Berghes to force conformity in Valenciennes through an oath given 4 August 1563.

> I swear and promise according the faith I owe to God and to the King my sovereign lord and prince that I will observe and adhere to the ordinances and placards of His Majesty, proclaimed on the matter of religion and of the holy, ancient Catholic apostolic and Roman faith and the extirpation of sects and heresies contrary to the aforesaid religion, and that I intend to persevere in the aforementioned holy Catholic faith without in any way adhering to those sects and heresies, and promise in addition that to further the observation of these placards and the maintenance of the holy Catholic faith, I will undertake all duties and make myself ready at all hours, even with arms if there is need as well as otherwise, as a good and loyal subject and Catholic man, and in my place and according to my station and proper charge, and on this I give my hand to you, my lord marquis, in the name of His Majesty.[106]

The obviously inadequate measure of imposing yet another oath on defiant people attracted scorn and ridicule. The Calvinists simply went through the forms of taking the oath or disappeared.

Troubles in Tournai pressed even harder, but there she had the extra measure of force provided by the citadel looming over the city. It was under her control and thus Margaret's orders to commissioners and the governor, Montigny, showed greater confidence, her remarks to the magistrates had a sharper edge, and her demands that officials curtail Calvinist activity became more strident. The Calvinist cause in Tournai had exceptionally clear definition and commissioners uncovered schools, publications, and charitable groups in addition to regular sermons, all evidence of a

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[104] Ibid., 2: 525–529. Report of the magistrates of Tournai and letters of Margaret and Montigny, 5–6 May 1563; EA 352 fo. 95–107. Letters of the magistrates and reports of the commissioners and Montigny, 11–29 May 1563; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 206.

[105] *Correspondance*, 3: 116–136. Letters of Philip II, 13 Oct. 1563.

[106] P.J. Le Boucq, *Histoire des troubles advenues à Valenciennes à cause des héresies (1562–1579)* (Brussels: 1864), 7.

highly disciplined organization. Her response actually involved imitating the Calvinists, adopting their standards for personal life and worship through redirecting Catholic behavior and having the magistrates act as a moral force. Margaret feared the effects of Calvinism, but she insisted that the Catholic community adopt the reform church as a model even as she labored to exterminate it.[107] A new placard contained innovative orders enjoining them to police errant families and to intrude into the possessions, freedoms, franchises, and liberties of all citizens. Forcing free people to ask for permission to leave town galled, and officials insisted that punishment had to have as a precondition conviction for the commission of a crime. The regent remained silent, fearing the angry rejection of new rules by the commoners, who constantly raised objections about religion and taxation.[108]

Her commissioners in Valenciennes received an anonymous letter that lamented the loss of commerce and the quartering of troops in Valenciennes. It detailed the misery of the people at the bottom of the social and economic order, and the magistrates and commissioners clearly disliked the message. They easily dismissed the threats of violence it contained, but could not ignore the vivid account of want and misery, as the authors spoke of being out of their minds from their own hunger and that of their children. The only criticism of the king came from a complaint that he accepted advice from too many priests.[109] Economic collapse made problems more horrifying. Margaret warned against vagabonds, beggars, and the presence of bands of brigands who had forced their way into monasteries and attacked villages in search of money and food. Banditry became an ominous sign of the weakness of her regency, and problems multiplied as the financial crisis worsened, disenchantment with Spanish governance matured, and heresy gripped the imagination of both its proponents and opponents. Soldiers and executions by fire kept psalm singing and field sermons in check, but expressions of personal fervor remained a dramatic

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[107] EA 352, fo. 220. Montigny to Margaret, 29 June 1563; *Correspondance*, 3: 20–27 and 94–111. Resolution of Margaret and the Council of State on Tournai, 9 July 1563 and reports of Montigny, the commissioners, and the Council of State, Aug.–Sept. 1563; G. Moreau, *Histoire du protestantisme à Tournai husqu'à la veille de la révolution des Pays-Bas* (Paris: 1962), 210–234; Charlie Steen, *Chronicle of Conflict: Tournai, 1559–1567* (Utrecht, 1985), 50–56.

[108] *Correspondance*, 3: 456–486. Correspondence and petitions concerning resistance to the placards, Nov. 1563; Ibid., 3: 151–155 and 179–190. Margaret's letters to Philip, 12 Nov. 1563 and 6 Jan. 1564.

[109] Paillard, *Valenciennes*, 3: 428–443 and 503–506. Philip's placard and correspondence of all involved, Sept. 1563, and letter of the poor, 1 Oct. 1563.

outlet. One man at Bruges spat out the communion wafer and Margaret heard of "insolent and horrendous" things every day. By the summer of 1564 she acknowledged the presence of Calvinist and Anabaptist "garbage" near her in Brussels.[110]

Yet she remained optimistic about chances for concord, as Guicciardini noted in May 1564. Margaret organized festivities at court to welcome the return of the members of the Order and she glowed with pleasure as the court once again filled with people.[111] She felt freer and even became more candid in letters to Philip. After all, she was now in charge and did not have to worry about the activities of Granvelle. However, her failed personal efforts to improve the Farnese fortunes caused her distress. Philip refused to consider returning Piacenza but realized that his own activities thwarted her dreams of a great marriage for Alexander and he hastened his search for a proper bride. While gratified, Margaret hated her lack of control and the partial concessions to her interests. She again thought seriously about abandoning the regency and returning to Italy, for the tasks were many and the rewards few. Financial distress provided a depressing backdrop, and religious skirmishes began to frighten her.

An abatement of activity toward the end of 1564 allowed Margaret to moderate her response to occasional Calvinist outbursts. She argued against punishing the multitude that attended sermons, provided they submitted and returned to the Catholic fold. On the other side, the tireless inquisitor Titelmans wrote directly to Philip to decry the continued presence of heresy. He identified "infected" towns and rural districts where assemblies remained common. To him, commissioners lacked vigor, magistrates dissimulated, and his own authority had too many limits. He asked for money and power, because he alone worked against heresy properly.[112] Magistrates petitioned the king against Titlemans, claiming his activities tended toward insanity. They also raised the broader issue of the futility of having a government counter the humors and opinions of the times, claiming that people could not be forced to change their views.[113]

The king expressed his admiration for Titlemans and his disdain for the petition of the magistrates. At that time, he occupied himself with

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[110] *Correspondance*, 3: 243–361. Letters of Margaret and Philip, Feb.–June 1564.

[111] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 233.

[112] C. Paillard, *Huit mois dans la vie d'un people* (Brussels: 1877), 308–311. Resolution of the Council of State, 8 May 1564; *Correspondance*, 3: 417–418. Letter of Titelmans, 5 Sept. 1564.

[113] *Correspondance*, 3: 513–516. Petition of the Four Members of Flanders, 20 Oct. 1564; *Correspondance*, 2: 256–257. Petitions of Flanders and of Bruges, 14 and 20 Oct. 1564.

plans to implement the decrees of the Council of Trent, whose resolutions delighted him because of their unwavering hatred of Protestantism. The decrees placed great emphasis on authority within the church, giving bishops and inquisitors greater direction of people's lives. Philip ordered Margaret to suspend customary church practices and to implement the provisions of the council immediately since he had already arranged everything through the papal nuncio in Madrid.[114] In the same dispatch, he acknowledged her report on the needs for the garrison forces, the increase in writings against the church, and the deterioration of relations within the provinces. Thus, his demand to impose the newly issued decrees of the Council of Trent was detached from reality and very nearly reduced her to despair. No one greeted his demands for acceptance of Trent with acclaim, which heightened his dislike of the deliberate pace of public action in the Netherlands, and he attempted to hasten the process by forbidding debate on the issue because the council itself had discussed everything thoroughly. In a private response, Margaret warned him that religious uniformity had not been common in the practice and doctrine of the Netherlands. Tradition had merged secular privileges, customs, and laws with those of the ecclesiastical order. In contrast, Philip demanded immediate uniformity and obedience, wishing to make his lands an example for all Christendom.[115]

The regent, not wishing to have such an important matter remain unaddressed, ignored the king's wishes. She sent out the issue for "consultation" in each body of the church, allowed deliberation in the councils at court, and asked the governors for advice. In her letter to Megen in Gelderland, Margaret candidly informed him that although she wanted his opinion, the king had forbidden debate and decreed the preeminence of the crown. In the Council of State, the decrees of the Council of Trent aroused considerable apprehension among those most dedicated to the crown who saw how the provisions would clash with secular authority on matters of police and administration.[116] Margaret, sworn to protect all the dignities, precedents, *régales*, and jurisdictions of the provinces, accepted Trent only conditionally and reminded the king of his oath to protect the same things. In her opinion, local rights originated in usage, privilege, and reason, and their proper maintenance created the public good, assuring the

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[114] *Correspondance*, 3: 299–306. Philip to Margaret, 23 Apr. 1564.

[115] Ibid., 3: 368–370 and 391–393. Letters of Margaret and Philip, 12 June and 30 July 1564; EA 493, fo. 11. Margaret's letter to the bishops, 8 June 1564.

[116] *Correspondance*, 3: 368–370. Margaret to Philip, 12 June 1564.

tranquility and repose of the commonwealth. No one at court wanted to debate matters of doctrine, fearing it might encourage evil-minded people to join the discussion.[117]

Philip detested both debate and Margaret's view of public affairs. His response was to ask for an investigation of all magistrates in the provinces who seemed determined to thwart him. If his conscience required change, his subjects should find pleasure in obeying him.[118] Margaret had no use for such a simple view, and she prepared a list of all the perplexing problems that put the commonwealth in danger. She carefully crafted a summary of the situation to be delivered by another member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, Count Egmont. She wanted Egmont to present it to Philip personally, hoping that an embassy by a man of such stature would achieve what her letters could not. She took months to prepare mission, for it combined matters of family with those of state. Egmont, she hoped, could convince the king to modify his policy while adding prestige to the elaborate ceremonies marking the marriage of Margaret's son Alexander to Maria of Portugal in 1565. Philip had finally arranged the match, and Egmont was charged with escorting Alexander from Madrid to Brussels for a ceremony that Margaret wanted to be the greatest event of its time. However, the crisis in the political structure and religious disorder aggravated everything and dominated her concerns as she prepared the instruction. Margaret wanted Philip to know that she could arm and prepare for civil war, or with his compliance she could give ground on some issues, the course that she preferred. She wished particularly to remove the fears of an inquisition, which she regarded as odious even to good people.[119]

Ordinary procedures, including executions, did continue, but often under difficult circumstances. In Antwerp the burning of the Calvinist leader Christophe Fabricius was noteworthy because, as the magistrates put it, of the insolence of the populace. Showers of stones greeted the officers sent to carry out the execution, and a mob tried to take away the wood destined for the fire. Wesenbeke spoke of the dangers magistrates faced:

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[117] *Briefwisseling*, 112. Margaret to Megen, 8 June 1564; *Correspondance*, 3: 458–460. Records of the meeting of the Council of State, 23 Aug. 1564; ibid. 3: 527. Margaret to Philip, 17 Jan 1565.

[118] *Correspondance*, 3: 527–528. Philip to Margaret, 3 Feb. 1564.

[119] Baron de Reiffenberg, *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche, Duchesse de Parme avec Philippe II* (Brussels: 1842), 13–15. Margaret to Philip, 24 Mar. 1564.

> . . . there was always the risk of losing not only the condemned prisoners, but at the same time their own lives. Among many examples, there is one of recent memory, the execution of Christophe Fabricius, a former Carmelite, whom the fleeing executioner, accompanied by the magistrates, killed by a dagger thrust rather than by fire when the people began to throw stones at them.

The tumult terrified the magistrates, and even foreign merchants joined a temporary militia to restore order.[120] Margaret even had to prohibit the staging of farces and comedies that made fun of Philip. Embarrassed, she wrote that only a sectarian, brigand, blasphemer, or thief would think of staging such things.

The prospect of the civil war made Margaret tread lightly in issues of alleged heresy among ruling groups.[121] Many disputes between the church and the magistrates would evoke cries of heresy even if they simply involved competing jurisdiction or battles over interpretation of books. However, the reality of the problem haunted her. In Flanders the rural church disintegrated, leaving congregations without priests in some places, or, more often, priests without congregations.[122] Troubled and apprehensive, the regent had to compromise in the major cities. Financial difficulties made payment of professional soldiers impossible, so she relieved the magistrates of the need to pay for forces if they raised large night watches made up of the bourgeois residents. She chose to leave troops in Tournai, which she regarded as thoroughly corrupt, but could only afford to pay forty men.[123] Sermons in the woods near Antwerp at Eckenen and Wilryck indicated that the Lord of Hoogstraten, who acted for the Prince of Orange, had done nothing to prevent them. Nor did the magistrates of Antwerp offer more than vague promises about curbing sermons, assemblies, conventicles, and vagabonds. They were eager to arrest a priest at Kiel who faced charges of seducing members of his flock, but they showed no desire to deal with the field preachers. The magistrates bluntly refused a direct order to act. They had to counter a report that heretics defecated on Catholic altars just before services, but they did so by claiming that

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[120] *Correspondance*, 3: 505. Magistrates of Antwerp to Margaret, 12 Nov. 1564; Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 80; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 240–241.

[121] EA 281 and 282. Correspondance with captains of border fortifications and others along the French frontier showed Margaret's increasing worry throughout 1564 and 1565.

[122] *Correspondance*, 3: 519–520. Margaret to Philip, 31 Dec. 1564.

[123] Steen, *Chronicle*, 59–60.

the Calvinists only fouled the corners of churches.[124] While such reports agonized Margaret and infuriated Philip, the tense situation in 1564 kept anyone from taking action.

Exchanges with Spain became bitter as the Calvinist challenge renewed the long-standing contest over authority. Heresy seemed to flourish, but orthodox religious dogma remained confusing for many loyal Catholics, limiting efforts to identify and attack Calvinism. Practical problems also intruded. General hard times brought on by the poor economy and harsh winters contributed to a period of lawlessness. In one startling episode, thirty bandits attacked a merchant's house in Bruges and neighbors proved unwilling to respond to cries for help. The bandits fled across the frozen river with stolen valuables. Authorities captured a few at Alost and they confessed to a series of similar robberies, some against monasteries. Their comrades tried to break into the prison to rescue them, but lost a pitched battle with Rassenghein, the governor. In reporting the events to Philip, Margaret lamented a general license in all things and added a new note to her account by asking Philip to return to the Netherlands. In a major change in her attitude, Margaret thought that all troubles would be corrected if Philip traveled to the provinces and lived among his subjects for a time. Despite all the information to the contrary, she somehow hoped that he had developed a better opinion of his northern subjects.[125]

Margaret did try to turn the situation to her advantage by threatening towns and churches with the prospect of disorders if they did not approve at least some taxes to keep the garrisons intact. After all, if commanders disbanded soldiers without pay, there would be little difference between their subsequent activities and those of the brigands in the countryside. While it was an unseemly way to conduct public business, Margaret regarded such threats as necessary. No such coercion worked to support religious affairs. The Calvinists became so bold that she feared the Catholic Church faced the danger of being swept away. Philip reissued the placards, but the Calvinists simply claimed that the documents were forgeries and Margaret was unable to counter their blunt and obvious challenge. She also lamented the loss of respect for the regime manifest in the content of posters appearing in Brussels, for they spared no one.[126]

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[124] *Correspondance*, 3: 517. Report of the magistrates of Antwerp, Dec. 1564; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 242–243.

[125] *Correspondance*, 3: 196 and 220–223. Letters of Margaret to Philip, 6 and 23 Jan. 1564.

[126] Ibid., 3: 286. Margaret to Philip, 29 Mar. 1564.

As if to underscore the point, she announced that the financial situation had deteriorated to the point where she had to take out a personal loan in Antwerp to meet urgent public debts. She also drew up plans to send the garrison forces to the frontier if she could not pay them, hoping thereby to limit the damage they could do. The lack of money unnerved Margaret, especially when it involved unpaid soldiers. She pleaded with Philip to send money to prevent her worst fears from coming true, and he did respond with partial funding of the garrisons. During the summer, the provincial estates grudgingly approved the *aides*, although in smaller amounts than requested. However, the underlying financial distress continued and served to heighten tension throughout the Netherlands as the fall of 1564, with its mediocre harvests, gave way to the harsh winter months of 1564–1565.

CHAPTER FOUR

MINGLING DELIGHT WITH DISASTER

1. *"Strange, variable, and dangerous times"*

The year 1565 overwhelmed Margaret. In her personal life, she joyfully labored to arrange a magnificent wedding for Alexander, lavishing money and effort in abundance. Philip's arrangement with Portugal was a great relief and she made a wholesale commitment to the ceremony. It became a moment of personal affirmation as she concentrated the attention of Brussels, the provinces, and the aristocracy on herself.[1] In contrast, her official duties made her confront dangerous and alarming situations in a struggle to maintain religious order and to encourage moderation as factions began to form. To make matters worse, natural disaster spread across the provinces as the hard, bitterly cold months of early 1565 caused widespread distress. Wesenbeke claimed that the natural calamity did much to change people's attitudes.

> And, as if the land had not enough woe from all its problems, after the harvest, in the winter of 1565, a great scarcity and dearth of grains and wheat spread through the entire Low Countries. This not only had the consequence of creating great confusion, misery, poverty and famine among the common people, but also their sentiment and mood, already very troubled, became much more distracted and quick to anger.[2]

Keenly aware of how the distress compounded problems, the court felt compelled to compromise on volatile financial and religious issues that provided the ingredients for civil war. Free of Granvelle, Margaret labored to establish a moderate regime that would find favor in the provinces as well as in Madrid. Like all her endeavors, this one required royal support but faced Philip II's hostility. Despite the confrontations over Granvelle, Philip did not grasp the intensity of the opposition to his policies, whereas Margaret recognized the many facets of rejection of Spanish absolutism

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[1] Renato Lefevre, *"Madama," Margarita d'Austria (1522–1586)* (Rome: 1986), 227.

[2] J. de Wesenbeke, *Memoires (1524–1566)* (Brussels: 1859), 123; G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere di G.B. Guicciardini a Cosimo e Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1567*, Battistine ed. (Brussels-Rome: 1949), 246–247.

and worked to moderate the effects of both royal intrusion and traditional resistance. Yet in the midst of these discussions, the court happily organized an elaborate wedding for Alexander and Maria of Portugal. Margaret was most anxious for the wedding to be a memorable one that would advance the Farnese position in all Europe. Philip, who had arranged the match and then reneged on the costs of the ceremonies, had little concern for Farnese interests but wanted the marriage to be a mark of his own power. However, he did not let that interfere with his anger over the behavior of his northern subjects. He rejected Margaret's advocacy of moderation, insisting on obedience to royal commands. Obdurate in maintaining a bleak opinion of the Netherlands, Philip found fault with everything. He intensely disliked challenges from the members of the Order who used the forum of the Council of State to express their grievances against royal policies. She attempted to soothe him in a personal letter, but his views had already hardened and he increasingly accepted the harsh advice of the Duke of Alva, a stern advocate of suppressing resistance.[3] Since he made no secret of his negative opinion, Margaret's efforts to encourage loyalty to Spain seemed unreal.

Philip's hard line might have been suitable in distant Madrid, but his regent had to be realistic. The king dismissed the independent nature of the provinces as a fantasy, but it was fact in Brussels, where privileges conditioned every relationship.[4] Even as she sent out commissions when trouble arose, Margaret feared both the reaction of both the "multitude" in the towns and the privileged.[5] Granvelle had challenged institutions as well as the behavior of the people and Margaret had to convince all parties that her efforts at collaboration were real and that there had been a genuine change in Brussels. A lingering hostility to the cardinal remained. After he left, a note of nasty reproach crept into the correspondence of each side. Granvelle's creatures in Brussels, notably Maximilian Morillon, furnished his master with anguished accounts of Margaret's lack of ability in public affairs. In return, she spoke with brusque contempt of the manner in which Granvelle had fished in troubled waters, coming close to accusing him of abuse of power.[6] The strongest possible statement on

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[3] C. Weiss, *Papiers d'État du cardinal de Granvelle* 9 vols. (Paris: 1852) 9: 279–280; Geoffrey Parker, *Dutch Revolt* (London: 1977), 64–67.

[4] J. De Iongh, *Madama, Margaretha van Parma* (Amsterdam: 1976), 288–298.

[5] *Correspondance*, 3: 522–540. Letters of Margaret to Philip, 17 Jan. 1565.

[6] M. Van Durme, *El Cardinal Granvella* (Barcelona: 1957); C. Piot, ed. *Correspondance du cardinal de Granvelle, 1565–1586, 12 vols.* (Brussels: 1878–1896), vol. 2, Letters of Maximilien Morillon.

the subject was the elaborate ceremony marking the return of Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn to the government. Orange joined her in advocating a rejuvenated court, and he even asked Margaret to allow his daughter to live with her at the Coudenburg Palace. She was the child of his first marriage and as his relations with Anna, his new Saxon wife, decayed, Orange wanted her in more congenial surroundings. Ecstatic, Margaret welcomed her to court, ignoring the other facts of Orange's life, which included dissembling on all issues related to religion and serving his own interests above all others.[7] During the months of celebration before the wedding, Margaret basked in the warmth of the new relationship, paying as little attention to the reality of his ambitions as she did to the cost of the extravagant plans she was making for her son's wedding.

She was, however, keenly aware of how financial, political, and religious distress moved to the forefront in public life. Her official role had grown more uncomfortable as dwindling revenue kept her from exerting control or directing affairs forcefully. Collapsing commerce and the extraordinary expenses arising from Philip's demands caused her credit to fall so sharply that loans became impossible to procure and even when selling anticipated revenue Margaret could only obtain sixty-seven percent of value instead of the customary already discounted seventy-one. As a corrective, the Council of State had attempted to develop a lottery to generate cash and to establish a bank at Antwerp to manage all governmental fiscal affairs. In collaboration with the members of the Council of Finance, Margaret wanted the new central bank to restructure the debt of all the provinces. The church seemed ready to grant the necessary subsidy to begin the enterprise.[8] Philip approved the idea, but he never furnished the edicts necessary to charter the bank and the idea faltered as a result of royal inaction.[9] By the summer of 1565 Margaret had exhausted the expedient of using salaries and pensions as security for short term loans.[10] She continued to negotiate with the provincial estates and councils, hoping

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[7] Arie T. Van Deursen, *Willem van Oranje, een biografish portret* (Amsterdam: 1995), 26.

[8] *Correspondance française*, 1: 73–77. Margaret sent her original proposal to establish a general bank in the Netherlands in 1564 and the second proposal came as her own credit failed to secure loans, 19 Aug. 1565; H. Van der Wee, *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy*, 1 (The Hague: 1963).

[9] H. Van der Wee, "The Economy as a Factor in the Beginning of the Revolt of the Netherlands," *Acta Historiae Neerlanidicae*, V (Leiden: 1971) 52–67; E. Knutter, *Het Hongerjar 1566* (Amsterdam: 1949), 71–99.

[10] *Correspondance française*, 1: 28. Margaret to Philip, 7 Aug. 1565.

to establish permanent funding.[11] No province wanted to be the first to negotiate terms, and obtaining any response became more difficult. The reaction of the estates of Flanders was typical. Its members wanted to act in concert with other estates but demanded to be informed about the details of public spending. The estates grudgingly agreed to taxes for the whole of the Netherlands and showed enthusiasm when raising revenue to be spent in Flanders, but would no longer fund general royal policy until the king had paid his debts.[12]

Problems arising from Calvinism also grew steadily. Margaret raged against the uncooperative magistrates of Valenciennes who failed to combat the "depraved heresies" of their willful and disobedient city. Departing from her usual practices, Margaret empowered a commission to by-pass usual judicial procedures and to conduct summary trials with greatly limited rights for the accused to offer a defense. The magistrates responded with equal fury, citing both written and customary law to support established procedures. Berghes, the governor, claimed that no privileges protected those who committed high treason, *lèse-majesté divine et humaine*, the ultimate accusation of the time. The magistrates contended that even *lèse-majesté* had to be supported by proof. Indeed, their resistance became so resolute that Berghes failed to find two members of the governing council willing to join the new commission.[13] In matters of conscience Margaret generally continued to agree with the idea of shepherding rather than compelling people, but in Tournai and Valenciennes open displays of Calvinism in 1565 forced a change in her opinion. In both cities, she empowered commissions to undertake executions, floggings, banishments, domiciliary searches, and the imposition of house arrest and fines for such crimes as the improper education of children.[14] The enthusiasm of many citizens in Valenciennes who suddenly rallied to accusation, terror, and execution pleased the court, which had long hoped to bring citizens into the fray, offering them a chance to join in crushing the Calvinists. Since the new religion made only converts and not friends, informants abounded along with those whose open delight at persecution and

[11] Ibid., 1: 12–15 and 21–23. Letters of Margaret and Philip, Feb. 1565.

[12] *Correspondance française*, 2: 89–90. Resolution of the Four Members of the Province of Flanders, 13 July 1565.

[13] C. Paillard, *Histoire des troubles à Valenciennes* 4 vols. (Brussels: 1874–1876), 4: 427–465. Correspondence of Margaret with magistrates and with Berghes, 6 Feb.–30 Nov. 1565.

[14] *Correspondance française*, 1: 77–87. Margaret to Philip, 19 Aug. 1565.

pain represented an unpleasant feature of the time. Communities became increasingly divided and hostility grew more pronounced.

The Calvinists also had before them the example of cities without garrisons in which Margaret's policy did not work. When the magistrates of Antwerp acquitted an alleged heretic, the outraged king demanded the man's re-arrest and trial in a different court. Margaret admitted the irregular character of the original proceedings, but she dared not criticize the margrave of Antwerp in such dangerous times, since she had word that Calvinist assemblies and conventicles had moved from the fields into the city. She told Philip that the sheer number of sectarians in Antwerp forced her to be cordial to the margrave. From Spain the matter had far greater simplicity and Philip pronounced Margaret's judgment faulty in the case of Antwerp even though he thought it correct in Valenciennes. The king told her to let it be known that he wanted a conviction and that the margrave should set the matter right immediately. Philip laced his letters with furious demands for persecution. He regarded it as unconscionable that those who held office in his name indulged in conniving and dissimulation, which he associated with the "pollution" of heresy.[15] Antwerp was a constant source of royal anger since the margrave refused to keep track of individual behavior and claimed that many accused of heresy resided in other lands and had a good reputation as merchants, which made him all the more loath to arrest them on the basis of mere accusations.[16] He thus refused a direct order from the king and, for the moment, Philip could do nothing about the situation, but it gave him an additional reason to regard everyone, including Margaret, with distrust.[17] Wesenbeke's memoir indicated some of the local response to Philip's anger, writing about the anguish, uncertainty, and plotting that he witnessed as Calvinism grew more popular.[18]

Such opinions increased the difficulties facing those who wished to sustain the royal cause. Philip persistently regarded all resistance to orders and to inquisitors as heretical behavior and demanded that Margaret investigate everyone. But she had no desire to be regarded as just another inquisitor by the good Catholics who would end up being examined along

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[15] Ibid., 1: 85 and 105–109. Margaret to Philip, 19 Aug. and 5 Nov. 1565. Philip's complaints against Antwerp grew steadily; see his diatribe against the margrave in *Correspondance française*, 3: 319. Philip to Margaret 23 Apr. 1564.

[16] *Correspondance française*, 3: 536–537, 9 Jan. 1565. Letter of the Margrave to Margaret.

[17] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 117–136.

[18] Ibid., 123.

with the heretics. Once again she asked that he allow the provincial councils to fulfill their traditional duty of watching for negligent magistrates. Clearly, even in extraordinary times, Margaret wanted the ordinary procedures and practices to prevail as much as possible. Only a cautious course could avert the acrimony that might cause civil war.[19] Margaret thus remained committed to moderation but Philip dismissed her opinion and continued to demand implementation of orders, such as the acceptance of the controversial provisions of the Council of Trent. He regarded local rights as insignificant in comparison with the great benefits to the public good as he interpreted it.[20]

The activities of Titelmans gave substance to general fears. The inquisitor longed to enlarge his bloody battle against heresy, and his impatience invariably caused a fierce fight with Catholic magistrates who were determined to protect the law and legal procedures. Margaret chided Philip for forgetting the tradition of written law, which accustomed people to having justice follow established patterns. The extraordinary practices of the inquisitor and general hostility to them emboldened the Calvinists, who placed posters attacking church and inquisition even at her own court.[21]

> I must also inform Your Majesty that on the first of the month, a large, scandalous poster was found attached to the portal of the court; . . . those who prepared it condemned the ecclesiastical order and the holy Council of Trent, demanding to live according the Augsburg Confession; and I hear that the same has been affixed to the notice board of the church of St. Guedule in this city, something that is an utterly intolerable bad example with dire consequences.[22]

Conflict and uncertainty pervaded the government. Normal business continued, but with a note of hysteria and considerable contradictory behavior. The magistrates of Bruges blamed all heresy on the presence of English merchants in their midst, but asked for Margaret's help in negotiations to establish even more trade with England.[23] Local churchmen became vehement in resisting the provisions of Trent, but they also reported the continual erosion of church attendance, with rural areas

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[19] *Correspondance*, 3: 536. Margaret to Philip, 17 Jan. 1565.

[20] *Correspondance française*, 1: 16 and 49. Letters of Philip to Margaret, 3 Apr. and 13 May 1565.

[21] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 136.

[22] *Correspondance française*, 1: 58. Margaret to Philip, June 1565.

[23] EA 282, fo. 68–72. Correspondence concerning the negotiations during the summer of 1565 at Bruges with the English. Montigny represented Margaret. Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 248–258.

suddenly showing the decline that many urban churches had experienced the previous year. Philip interpreted opposition as a case of saintly work being thwarted by people with the worst of motives, secret heresy. While factions had not reached a point where civil war seemed imminent, the king responded to opposition as if already engaged in conflict.[24]

Margaret wished to calm the strife and to institute changes that would foster peace. However, all her plans for the future required royal approval, and she relied on Count Egmont convincing Philip in Spain. Part of her relief at having the members of the Order return was manifest in her choice of him for the task. His stature ensured that he would make a presence at court, as did his other mission, which was to escort Alexander to Brussels for his wedding. Margaret hoped that the ceremonies in Madrid would encourage Philip to feel inclined toward her proposals. The urgency of the situation required that Egmont travel in the middle of the exceptionally harsh winter. She charged him with making a full report of the situation in Brussels and prepared a long and detailed instruction that presented the policies developed in the face of adversity. He also carried a petition from the Order of the Golden Fleece. In this case, the hopes and aspirations of the aristocrats and the court were the same. Both wanted Philip to quicken his response to her letters and to accept the Netherlands on their own terms. However, Margaret's instruction had to deal candidly with religious disorder, which the aristocrats pointedly ignored. She admitted to foreign influence from France, England, and Germany in the growth of heresy and ideas of religious freedom, but argued against isolation or impeding commercial contact. Through Egmont she ascribed all internal troubles to venomous Calvinists determined to destroy the traditional, natural relationships in the provinces. Anabaptists and Lutherans contributed to the problem, but she particularly castigated the Calvinists because their activities had such wide-ranging consequences. The challenge affected many who did not convert, but who called into question the saints and practices of Catholicism. Converts to Calvinism also generated friction, pitting neighbor against neighbor and even fathers against children through their invidious questioning and abrasive attitude. Unfortunately, her accurate and candid descriptions of the Calvinists did not help her win Philip over to moderation.

The instruction also offered a realistic and critical approach when discussing the disastrous effects of Philip's reorganization of the government

[24] EA 282, fo. 66–95. Correspondence concerning Bruges and Flanders, May–July 1565.

in Brussels. To his regent, the arrangement had resulted in misgovernment and general contempt for royal ordinances. Councils had vied with one another in competition for power, robbing her regime of authority and allowing secret affairs to become part of public debate in the ensuing rancor. Consequently, people grew contemptuous of the councils and did not hesitate to challenge their authority. Margaret asked that the Council of State resume its original role, radically undoing the system that Philip had designed to curb the aristocracy. Lack of respect and reputation rendered all government activity suspect in the eyes of the populace and she understood many of the reasons for discontent. The aristocracy had not rushed to reinforce the regard of the people for the crown because efforts to carry out royal policy cost them materially and in reputation. The growing distrust of local estates exacerbated the problem, and their appeals against taxes and the new bishoprics excited others to obstruct government action through legal maneuvers. In a rare account of the actual situation, Margaret wrote that she owed soldiers four million florins in back pay and that the debt charged to the cities, long overdue in 1565, remained at three and a half million florins. The debt continued to cause the arrest of merchants and the seizure of goods, infuriating many members of provincial estates. Margaret reminded Philip that she had long since alienated all lands, offices, and benefices pertaining to the royal domain and encumbered future revenues. The normal functions of government had virtually stopped in the absence of funding.

Margaret charged Egmont with the task of making all these points forcefully enough to persuade the king to come to the Netherlands to deal with the problems personally. First however, he had better send money so that the lands would still be intact on his arrival. Next, speaking for the Order, Egmont urged that more power be restored to the aristocracy by increasing their membership on the Council of State. While Margaret had no part in this maneuver, she sympathized with it, and some of those Egmont wished to have added to the Council of State already served her regime.[25] However, Philip wanted no part in restoring an aristocracy that he had grown to dislike. After all, he had placed Granvelle in position and the failure of his plans angered him considerably. Thus, Egmont's embassy, like all others dispatched during the regency, bore little fruit even though the king showered him with attention in the court. Sending the count on such a serious mission with constitutional implications

[25] *Correspondance française*, 2: 53–54. Memoir of Egmont, 24 Mar. 1565.

for the Netherlands while also having him serve in a major ceremonial capacity gave the venture an ambiguous character. Margaret worried that should he fail, strife, even revolt would follow Philip's refusal. Yet there he was, conveying serious messages while also fully engaged in the rituals of the Spanish court as he prepared the conceited, thoroughly Spanish Alexander for his journey north. The public kindness shown by Philip may have been the consequence of Egmont's new relationship with Alexander. That part of his mission was brilliant, with courtiers taking part in elaborate receptions and presentations, all of which helped to increase the enormous self-esteem of the count. What Egmont did not realize was that royal favor was reversed once the king entered his council chambers.

Egmont began his ceremonious journey back to Brussels in high humor. He thought his embassy had good effect since Philip did not in the least mind misleading him, responding positively to Egmont in public, but crafting very different orders in council. The proud, egotistical Egmont viewed everything as merely an acknowledgment of his great worth, and the friendly words of the king convinced him that every request had been granted. Philip sent Egmont back with verbal assurances that he would act with moderation but with sealed written messages stating the precise opposite, thus ensuring the count's humiliation at his formal reception at Brussels.[26] When the party arrived in Brussels on 30 April, Egmont bragged of his closeness to the king and assured everyone of royal agreement to every aristocratic wish. In a combination of festival and political intrigue, Egmont advanced himself at every event and clearly regarded himself as the new aristocratic leader of the regime. No other member of the Order indulged in such wishful thinking and Orange had serious doubts about Egmont's triumph even before his dream world collapsed.

Margaret had a clear idea of how she wanted to manage her government, but became trapped by Philip's hard line. The sealed letters carried back by Egmont had a devastating effect, humiliating him and leaving everyone apprehensive about Philip's intentions. The idea had been to establish a functional regime in Brussels, but the reality was a firm, even unpleasant, new statement of Philip's determination that everyone should obey without question. Margaret was crushed, for she had placed all her hopes in Egmont, trusting that his stature and his Catholicism would be an advantage when he addressed the autocratic Philip. Despite his

[26] *Correspondance*, 3: 541–552; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 244–249; Viglius, *Mémoires*, Wauters ed., (Brussels: 1858), 176–177.

public endorsement of the views of the count, Philip's secret instruction ordered her to share the orders only with those who could be relied on to carry out royal wishes. The instruction reiterated the need for obedience, enforcement of the placards, and imposition of the Council of Trent decrees. Margaret circulated the document cautiously, but it still inspired debate, not blind obedience. Even the most loyal supporters of the king respected the custom of consultation and giving advice on such essential affairs.[27] As the orders became common knowledge, resentment against the king grew. Margaret felt uneasy about his refusal to allow compromise or to discuss changes that she had already put into effect. As regent she wanted discussions about inquisitions, the activities of Titelmans in Bruges, and the automatic savage punishment for Anabaptists, and the pensions that were promised to the Golden Fleece but never delivered. While the cheating of the elite aristocracy might appear justifiable during a time of fiscal crisis, their angry response did not just represent a fit of pique on the part of the pampered privileged. The funds paid the salaries of those who served the Order in military and governmental functions. Egmont increased the debate by publicly announcing that the king told him one thing at court and then furnished him with a very different instruction for the regent, making him the unknowing carrier of an unpleasant and surprising message.[28] The harsh dose of political reality forecast the ultimate ruin of Margaret's regency, setting it on a course for disaster.

None of her hopes survived the royal dispatch. Wesenbeke related the consequences of the king's secretive dismissal of Egmont's concerns.

> . . . having heard and obtained firm promises and intimation that His Majesty found them justified and that he would send after him dispatches conforming to that, he was dismissed and returned to the provinces. All of which caused the lords and all others who heard this news to rejoice, anticipating that by the first dispatches the provinces would be calmed and satisfied. But nothing followed, and no missive justified that hope, which changed into deep despair.[29]

Margaret longed to resolve problems through discussions in a reestablished Council of State, but her ideas were utterly out of keeping with the clear statement of Spanish absolutism. The wrecked plans eroded her

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[27] *Correspondance*, 1: 50–53. Margaret to Philip, 14 May 1565.

[28] Ibid., 1: 53–60. Margaret to Philip, 22 July 1565; G. Dumont, *Marguerite de Parme: Bâtarde de Charles Quint* (Brussels: 1999), 203–295.

[29] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 124.

position just as Orange indicated his willingness to join her governing efforts.

During the long months of Egmont's embassy, Margaret had directly addressed the financial situation of her government, hoping to reestablish positive fiscal order. Her reports showed the basically sound financial condition of the regime if not for the extraordinary expenses of the garrisons and royal grants of pensions. She had long before abandoned the dream of maintaining an elaborate court, but unexpected expenses kept ruining even her restrained budget. The provinces usually funded normal public business without rancor and in 1565 they gradually renewed the traditional taxes, *aides*, although in smaller amounts than requested, forcing the regent to make only partial payments to the garrison soldiers and to ignore royal pensions. The frigid winter caused genuine distress and her soldiers nearly froze and suffered all the woes of malnourishment.[30] Her pleas for royal funds fell on deaf ears. Philip told her that he did what he could but that he had grown tired of hearing her remonstrate. In truth, the financial situation in Spain itself had declined, but he failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation and still regarded the provinces as a source of money for pensions and soldiers. The king ordered her to pay the pensions that he had assigned, and her inability to do so infuriated the recipients, who of course directed their anger against her. No group hesitated to vent frustration in her direction. Hostility toward the crown also created a new sense of commonality among the estates as the regent approached them for additional funds. Following the lead of Brabant, all of the estates began to deduct from tax revenue some of the money that the king owed, although the gesture remained on a modest scale and the royal debt continued to haunt merchants. Margaret undertook complicated negotiations to free merchants imprisoned for it and complained to Philip that the situation had forced her into one rotten financial agreement after another. The interest due had become greater than the original value of the loan.[31]

There was also the fear that Calvinist protests would merge with conflict between unpaid soldiers and townsmen. She pleaded with churchmen in volatile areas like Flanders to abandon their existing ways and become energetic and capable. Margaret wanted them to be firm in "strange, variable, and dangerous" times, but the church leaders wrote back to tell her

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[30] *Correspondance française*, 1: 2–7. Margaret to Philip, 29 Feb. 1565.

[31] Ibid., 1: 27–37 and 42–43. Letters of Margaret to Philip, 29 Mar. and 12 Apr. 1565.

that they could no longer recruit able people or change the practices she criticized. The sudden reappearance in Brussels of posters lambasting Catholic practices and threatening magistrates who allowed them underscored the consequences of such ecclesiastical obstinacy.[32] At court the problem of salaries and pensions reached crisis point, with members of the councils, who themselves remained unpaid, debating what to do about the flood of demands for money. As regent she begged Philip to stop promising people money when none existed and criticized his habit of claiming to have sent her funds for pensions when he had actually dispatched letters of credit charged against future trade fairs, documents that had small face value. Margaret acknowledged that the situation made her letters seem wheedling, something that embarrassed her greatly.[33] While Philip deflected her remarks with vague excuses, he did send some hard cash in the summer of 1565, but only enough to make partial payments to those promised royal bounty.

2. *Extravagance in the Midst of Want*

Margaret's sense of impending financial doom did not prevent her from spending a fortune to make Alexander's wedding noteworthy, and it placed an exceptional strain on finances. The marriage, set for November, reflected the designs and desires of the Spanish court where he had lived for years, but Margaret rejoiced at the match and she wished to make the festivities as splendid as possible. The initial plans had called for a wedding in Lisbon, but Philip, perhaps to transfer the cost to Margaret, moved the entire affair to Brussels. Before she knew of the change, Margaret had urged Alexander to present himself in Lisbon adorned with elegant clothing and bearing rich jewels for Maria. She told him to spare no expense, and when the marriage was suddenly hers to plan, her zeal for an extravagant show knew no bounds. The bride, the daughter of the Portuguese king, was a shy, studious woman of twenty-five. Maria disliked festivities and favored quiet pursuits. Almost prudish, she was very different from Alexander, who had adapted fully to the splendor and arrogance of the Spanish court. Margaret ignored the differences, disregarding everything that might limit her desire to present an epic ceremony that would attract the comments of all Europe. She wanted a grand display of

[32] EA 282, fo. 56–63. Letters of Margaret to Bruges, Ghent, and Flanders, May 1565.
[33] *Correspondance française*, 1: 71–77. Margaret to Philip, 22 Jul. 1565.

imperial symbols to overcome the illegitimacy of the Farnese family and her own background.[34] Thus she spent willfully and repeatedly nagged Ottavio and Philip for money.

The preparations took months and involved the entire court long before Egmont returned with Alexander in April. Margaret gave passionate attention to each detail, feeling that the high point of her life should want for nothing. The ceremonies and processions had to be a visible mark of the triumph of the Farnese house. Francesco Marchi designed and built a special carriage for the bride, an effort that consumed weeks and great sums of cash. Designed in accord with classical Roman pageantry, it was adorned with the deities of mythology in a wonderful array of carving and metalwork.[35] In other instances, financial distress often intruded and challenged her extravagant wishes. The new plans also made it the responsibility of the Farnese's to bring Maria and a very large retinue to the Netherlands. Since Parma had no navy, Margaret had to make the arrangements and had difficulty in obtaining ships to transport the princess. However, with the assistance of Orange, Margaret commissioned the vice-admiral of the Netherlands to outfit his ships in splendid fashion and make the voyage. Ottavio was appalled at the cost, but Margaret chided him for giving the appearance of inferiority. How could he ignore such a grand opportunity to increase his prestige?[36] Indeed, aside from his shock over costs, Ottavio was enthusiastic over the marriage, knowing how much it would advance his own position.

At court, Count Mansfeld organized the participation of the members of the Order and recruited his own large retinue to escort the Portuguese princess to Brussels. He arranged a tournament, the first episode of the festivities, held during the bitter days of late winter on the Grande Place in Brussels. After a day of mock combat, the magistrates entertained the court with banqueting, plays, and fireworks. In all of the events, Margaret labored to present herself well, reviving images of her connection to imperial power and emphasizing the significance of the Farnese family. She also had to make a good appearance not just to a future daughter-in-law, but to a fully grown son whom she had not seen in seven years. That was one reason she chose the grand and expansive Egmont for the task of

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[34] Iongh, *Madama*, 288–289.

[35] S. Mantini, "Ceremonie, Ingressi, Funerali: Simboli Potere de Marguerite d'Austria," in S. Mantini, *Margherita d'Austria (1522–1586): Costruzioni politiche e diplomazia, tra Corte Farnese e Monarchia Spagnola* (Rome: 2003), 246–247.

[36] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 207–209.

bringing Alexander to Brussels. Exuding pride on every occasion, Egmont represented Margaret elegantly and presented her son in a variety of ceremonies, finally arriving in Brussels after weeks on the road.[37] Alexander exceeded all of Margaret's expectations in his stature and presence. He had, however, become the perfect Spanish courtier—arrogant and conceited—a change that delighted Margaret, who rejoiced in how different from Ottavio he had become. When Alexander demonstrated that he thought himself superior to the Netherlands' aristocracy, they grew cold toward him, and the people of Brussels began to regard him in the same light as Philip. Margaret ignored how thoroughly Spanish he had become and thought of him as being like her father. Years later when the provinces had disintegrated into civil war, Alexander would return to assume the duties of captain general and regent. However, in 1565 the Prince of Parma was only of passing interest, although his marriage served as a bright moment in a bleak year.[38]

Margaret insisted that all events have a fabulous appearance. As her plans began to unfold, Brussels became a huge stage filled with moments of ostentation and pomp. Balls, receptions, and banquets succeeded one another in quick succession and a suddenly happy court ignored the ruinous expense of Margaret's projects. All the great aristocrats joined Orange at court and Ottavio arrived in October with a large Italian retinue. While he too was proud, Ottavio was also appalled at the great waste that he saw everywhere. His already strained relations with Margaret grew worse. External factors did intrude, casting shadows over the proceedings. Montigny scheduled his own wedding for that summer, and brought even more aristocrats from Tournai to Brussels. Both great and small, they took the opportunity to discuss the king's intentions and to lament the loss of prestige they experienced under his condescending rule. The removal of Granvelle had not produced the effects they desired and a rumor already circulated that Egmont had been duped and that the king's official reply was a harsh condemnation of all their aspirations. Their malaise was shared by the commoners, who feared Philip's intentions, making them anxious about the prospects for reform and economic renewal. Popular speculation included rumors that Philip would come at the head of a huge

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[37] *Correspondance de Philip II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas*, L.M. Gachard ed. 6 vols. (Brussels: 1848–1849) 1: 352; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 250–258 includes details on preparations for the wedding as well as apprehension about the outcome of Egmont's mission.

[38] D'Onofrio, *Carteggio*, 135–139.

army to enslave the Netherlands. Within the vast wedding party, only the Italians remained oblivious to problems in and around the court.[39]

In the meantime, as regent, Margaret faced disturbing problems. The extravagant wedding made her even more incapable of assisting people who became reduced to a state of near famine. All feared that want would create uproar and havoc. Harvests had been meager and the grain shipments through the Baltic suffered as Denmark interrupted trade through the Sound for its own purposes. She and Orange considered naval action against Denmark and also began limiting the export of domestic grains.[40] General financial distress increased the need for charity, posing dangers for both church and commonwealth when the poor and hungry went without succor.[41] The court held a contradictory position, engaging in lavish festivities while public business was dominated by want and religious confrontation. Eager anticipation coexisted with grave apprehension. Maria's convoy arrived the first of November after a miserable voyage, but Margaret's excitement at meeting her was overshadowed by the arrival of an extraordinary missive from Philip, the Segovia Woods Letter, which demolished all hope that she could rule through compromise, something the king rejected along with any notion of toleration. Fearing the reaction of the aristocracy and the people of Brussels if the letter's contents became known, Margaret did not take it to the Council of State until after the wedding ceremony. In a cruel twist of fortune, she faced disaster at the very climax of the weeks of festivities designed to enhance the prestige of her family. Obsessed with the wedding, she refused to allow anything to trouble her plans and thus confronted none of the issues.

She could not show her fear and dismay as Ottavio conducted Maria into Brussels attended by the aristocracy of the Netherlands and Parma, organized in a torchlit procession. The streets were filled with decorations designed by Francesco Marchi, who had used gold and silver wherever he could. Everything was a stage set designed to put Alexander and Maria in the best possible light. Maria, small and elegant, was a perfect physical match for Alexander and she was obviously enthralled by the spectacle as she proceeded through Brussels in the lavish new carriage. The huge

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[39] Marchi, *Cento lettere*, 18.

[40] *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d'Orange*, L.P. Gachard, ed. 6 vols. (Brussels: 1847–1866) 2: 92–101. 10–17 May 1565; Viglius, *Mémoires*, 177–182.

[41] Van Deursen, *Willem van Oranje*, 30–33; F. Rachfahl, *Wilhelm von Oranien und der niederländische Aufstand* 3 vols. (The Hague: 1906–1924), 2: 400–475; C. Wedgwood, *William the Silent* (London: 1944), 67–72.

carriage was covered with designs and images that related to Roman pageantry. Like the other decorations depicting allegories, symbols of family, and coats of arms, the carriage was part of a visible triumph of the Farnese family. Marchi had placed elaborate structures, including a Greek temple in the Corinthian order, along the route and he created a machine that emitted fragrances as it was pulled through the streets.[42] Margaret waited in the Aula Magna, the great hall of the Coudenburg, along with Orange and Egmont, who competed for place. The archbishop of Cambrai, there to perform the marriage ceremony, waited in the chapel because he disapproved of the lavish display by the family of a bastard child, even one of an emperor. But the festivities went on without his approval, with renewed banqueting, balls, and games scheduled for a full week. The wedding ceremonies drew to a close with a grand banquet in the palace. Eight hundred enjoyed the lavish display of food, drink, and gifts. The great aristocrats jousted and dueled with Amazons and wild men and the air was thick with the powder of gunfire from mock battles. The city of Antwerp presented the couple with the most extraordinary gift, a massive structure of sugar adorned with animals, people, and objects, all relating to Mary of Portugal's life and crafted out of sugar as well, a rare extravagance for the time.[43]

3. *The Segovia Woods Letter*

The gift was the last act of the festival that Margaret had planned so carefully, and it was to be the final grand ceremony in her life until her return to Italy. Festivals had masked a grim reality that was made even worse by Philip's letter. Royal demands for action had always exceeded the capacity of anyone to implement them, but the king never questioned the merit of his plans. He became the advocate of wholesale interference into the life, culture, and thought of the Netherlands, actively seeking censorship, control of education, and regulation of habits, travel, and entertainment. Philip adopted the position that judges had to enforce the placards or resign. In addition, he demanded the instant transformation of all churchmen, who had to reform and live in accord with the decrees of Trent. As Margaret was preparing for the wedding and planning a new start in

[42] S. Mantini, "Cerimonie, Ingressi e Funerali: Simboli Potere di Margherits d'Austria," in S. Mantini ed., *Margherits d'Austria*, 247; Lefevre, "*Madama," Margarita d'Austria*, 249.

[43] Iongh, *Madama*, 300–301; Dumont, *Marguerite*, 211–216.

governance, Philip was meeting with his councils to consider each aspect of his plan, and by the end of September he felt prepared to present it to Margaret. He had taken none of her views into account and offered a furious repudiation of compromise, which, drafted at his retreat in the Segovia Woods, became the decisive symbol of division between the king and his northern subjects.[44]

The Segovia Woods letter shocked and chagrined Margaret, for it repudiated her moderate approach and exuded hostility to both her and Egmont, clearly summarized in this passage:

> Touching on the resentment that you have perceived over several things that the Prince of Gavres (Count Egmont) might have understood from our conversations, my letters from Valladolid do not seem in some points to correspond at all to the report that he made about it and to the negotiations that were undertaken in religious matters, but I do not see nor understand that by these I have made the least innovation in those things for which the aforesaid Prince of Gavres had responsibility. Because as for the inquisition, my intention is that it be conducted by inquisitors as has been done up to the present and as it pertains to divine and human law. And it is not a new thing because it was always done so in the time of the late emperor . . ., and in my own time the feared drawbacks did not become apparent, proximate, or great where the inquisitors were allowed to provide themselves with what was needed for their office and when they were assisted in it; and since you see the importance of this, I charge you with all my power to do in this matter what is necessary and not to allow it to be treated in any other fashion, knowing how much I have taken this to heart and how much contentment it will bring me.

The letter dismissed seeking advice from councils and estates as too time-consuming. Philip ordered her to disregard opposition, to reinforce the new bishops, and to impose canonical remedies for heresy found in the provisions of Trent, all of which he regarded as in force because he willed it. Should disputes arise such as that between Bruges and Titelmans, Margaret always had to side with the inquisitor, preserving that dignity and office at all cost. He also gave her advice on how to deal with posters, which eroded her authority as well as his. He wanted her to hire informants, for nothing could remain so secret in Philip's view that information on it could not be purchased. Throughout the letter he expressed a deep suspicion of everyone and everything. Thus the decline in church

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[44] *Correspondance française*, 2: 93–100. Account of council meetings in Spain, Oct. 1565; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 249–251 relates the worries at court over the king's responses to Egmont.

attendance made everyone heretics, but when the new bishops reported an increase in communicants, he regarded it as trickery. The inquisition alone protected divine and human law, and the danger loomed as immediate and not in the realm of theory. Nor should there be delays in punishment of heretics, and Philip expressed outrage at the effort to moderate the placards.

> This also is a response to what you have represented about the condition of the state . . . and I must not neglect to inform you that from what I have heard of the condition in which religious affairs are found over there, it is not appropriate to make changes, so the placards of His Majesty must be executed, and I think that the cause of the evil which has existed and which augments and advances, has been the negligence, weakness and dissimulation of judges.
>
> Nor can I accept fully what has been represented to me, but believe that what I have told you here in response is what is proper for the good of religion and my aforesaid lands over there that amount to nothing without it. And this is the way for the conservation of justice, peace, and tranquility. And since you thus see how important it is, I require you henceforth to follow the direction through which what I have ordered can best be effected and well done. That would be the thing from which I would receive the most satisfaction from you and from the lords serving you, to whom you will give the same charge so that they will employ themselves in the matter and will not fail, knowing the satisfaction they would give me beyond meeting the duty that their status gives them and acting in accord with the obligations they have to the service of God and me, to the universal good of the lands over there and to themselves in particular.[45]

Philip's orders overwhelmed Margaret by requiring her to follow policies that would guarantee opposition and further undermine her already tenuous position. A few in her government applauded the hard line it took, but most seemed aghast or unnerved. It arrived just as she had hoped to take full control and to guide the Netherlands with the Council of State. Orange had been on the verge of drawing closer to her, but he resumed his aloof stance and she increasingly turned to Tomàs Armenteros for advice and solace.[46] Her personal life depended on success in the Netherlands, since nothing remained to be done for her son and living with Ottavio was out of the question. Only her duties as regent and governess were left to occupy Margaret, but she dreaded being trapped in an uncomfortable stalemate with Philip. She had abandoned the idea of creating a civilized court, but

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[45] *Correspondance française*, 1: 99–103. Philip to Margaret, 17 Oct. 1565.
[46] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 215.

had hoped that a reconstructed Council of State would at least make it a respected center for public affairs. Philip's letter dashed that hope, forcing her to continue to follow policies that had negative consequences.

His commands forced people, most quite reluctantly, to take a stand on the issue of royal authority, speeding the apparent disintegration of her government. She had the difficult task of reporting to Philip its disastrous results—the presence of open opposition. Margaret deplored the decision and the advisors who had guided him to it. Unknown to her, the Duke of Alva had been chief among them, having already undertaken the task of being the agent of destruction for the Netherlands. The Calvinists began to harden their own position, further eroding urban and provincial authority. Margaret's regency became hopelessly compromised, for her government depended on the goodwill of the provinces and the clear support of the aristocracy, and they withdrew, meeting to discuss affairs outside the governmental councils. Margaret had designed Egmont's mission to Philip to help explain all problems in the clearest of terms, but the result had been to intensify royal intransigence, forcing everyone to choose between overt opposition and total capitulation to the Spanish regime. The cruelest part for Margaret was trying to decide whether she could continue to serve the king when he had shown that he held her in such low esteem and valued none of her ideas. The letter condemned her to weakness and submission.

For the aristocracy, the position of the king clarified their own. Hundreds of aristocrats had gathered for the wedding festivities and they took the opportunity to discuss politics and religion. The contemptuous treatment of Egmont shocked them all, and those who had come filled with the spirit of Calvinism regarded Philip's refusal to discuss religious compromise as a royal death warrant. A large group of minor aristocrats who were passionate for their faith and for moderating Spanish policies, took the initiative. The king's intransigence struck an immediate chord, and while some attended the glittering court displays, others gathered to hear sermons.[47] When the text of the Segovia Woods letter became known, their indignation was vehement, for they had the choice of resistance or martyrdom. Their meetings resulted in the forging of an agreement that took a long step towards the dissolution of the commonwealth because it flatly rejected royal demands for religious persecution. The members of the Order were joined by hundreds of lesser aristocrats in opposition.

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[47] Iongh, *Madama*, 302–303.

Jan Marnix, Henry, baron of Brederode, and Orange's brother Louis of Nassau offered solid leadership, but a new element was also furnished by the participation of the Calvinists with their strong ties to the very un-aristocratic world of the cities and towns. Together they formed the League of the Compromise.

Orange, always crafty when it came to political moves, quickly joined, along with Egmont, Hoorn, and additional members of the Order of the Golden Fleece such as Floris, Count of Culemburg. The movement combined traditional political objectives with dramatic religious demands. Their opposition to a stronger monarchy represented the past, but their turn toward evangelism reflected the efforts of the new church. The Calvinist preachers, including François du Jon, or Junius, who had just arrived from Geneva, participated in the meetings but hardly needed to instill them with a spirit of resistance to the placards and the inquisition, sentiments that bound Catholics and Protestants together.[48] The signatories to the compromise never spoke against the king, but they scarcely masked their contempt for his religion and politics. They contended that the king was being misled by elements hostile to the Netherlands, people anxious for him to violate his oaths, enforce the placards, and impose an inquisition. The compromise was vehement in denouncing the suggestion of an inquisition, calling it the mother of all disorder and injustice. It raised the prospect of the loss of sanctions for tradition, law, and privileges, with all people becoming slaves to inquisitors of no quality. Those who signed bound themselves to act in concert to prevent an inquisition. The Segovia Woods letter thus had effectively created an aristocratic faction with religious overtones.[49]

When the Council of State resumed its sessions, it resolved to counter the orders that had come from Spain, claiming that executing them was out of the question. Only Viglius pleaded for obedience, fearing that the council was setting forth on a dangerous course with unknown consequences. Orange, resolute and pessimistic, said that they were all about to witness the start of a frightful new tragedy.[50] Philip had wanted to check his influence by moving his arch enemy, the Duke of Aerschot into

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[48] François du Jon, or Junius, a native of Bourges, was a teacher at Geneva and a refugee from the French Wars of Religion. Several others arrived and helped to reinvigorate the Reformed community. P.M. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 1554–1569* (Cambridge: 1978), 51–82; G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London: 1977), 69–76.

[49] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 122–127; Viglius, *Mémoires* 178–183. These two works offer contrasting views of the foundation of the League of the Compromise.

[50] Iongh, *Madama*, 305.

the Council of State, but it only served to heighten tension. Margaret's feelings were grounded in despair. Messages responding to her letter to each provincial governor giving an account of Philip's orders showed that the furious response in Brussels was shared throughout the land. She had to inform Philip that the discontent had grown widespread because people supported the constitution of the Netherlands and not his political ideals. Margaret regretted that in an effort to obey his commands she had exhausted every means in her power and no had no idea where to turn. Worried about her despair, Armenteros tried to have a friend at court tell the king of how devoted Margaret was and how much the new situation hurt her. Nothing came of those efforts.

Feeling hopeless in the midst of torment, Margaret received depressing reports each day at the end of 1565. A year that had started with such hope finished with provincial governors offering their resignations, city magistrates sharing their alarm at the restless anger of their people, and a new wave of posters and broadsides lampooning church and crown. One even challenged Egmont and Orange to act openly against the inquisition. When someone slipped Margaret one of the pamphlets as she left church, it caused her great distress. She could no longer embroider in council meetings, but sat gloomily with her head resting on her left hand as she muttered and groaned while taking notes. She knew that the bold behavior of the Calvinists stemmed from the large number of adherents to the League of the Compromise, for it offered a program broad enough to attract Catholics as well. They presented a totally negative response to a ruler who had rejected their way of life, claiming that they might as well be Turkish slaves. At first the League had no firm religious plan, and some followed Lutheran teachings, but quickly the Calvinists took control through sheer audacity. Margaret's depression over heresy was genuine and those around her at court regarded Calvinists as "perverse and unfaithful souls," but she wanted to react moderately. When Philip rejected her plans, Margaret was left to occupy an isolated position with no support in the Spanish court.[51]

[51] Lefevre, *"Madama," Margarita d'Austria*, 228.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONFEDERATE SPRING

1. *Challenging Margaret*

The excitement and splendor of the wedding ceremony vanished and anxiety brought on by the king's letter and another savage turn in the weather replaced the previous mood of gaiety. Gloomy, desperate reports came to Brussels from every quarter by early January 1566. A hard, enduring freeze settled over the provinces as waves of Arctic air swept south in relentless succession. Every river froze and the cold took a cruel toll on the malnourished and poorly housed. Unprotected animals died, as did fruit trees and bushes. The terrifying winter had succeeded a miserable fall with a poor harvest. The provinces never produced enough grain for subsistence and the growth of the cities required reliance on imports. Affordable food supplies disappeared. The sharp rise in prices made the grain merchants objects of scorn and fear, and there were disorders in the cities.[1] Worse still, floods the previous fall had damaged dikes and canals, leaving fields waterlogged, delaying spring sowing, and postponing relief from the food shortage.

Distress encouraged strain within the social and political fabric in the tense months of winter. Margaret knew that the aristocracy, which she admired, only adorned the provinces. The bourgeoisie created the prosperity she valued, but she found their independent political and social attitudes unattractive. A limited spirit of freedom had developed in every city of the Netherlands, and there was no lack of criticism of Spanish policy. The disastrous weather only added to popular dislike of the remote king, who made demands on money and traditions at such an awful time. Royal orders in 1566 threatened their way of life just as their spirit of independence challenged the basis of Spanish rule. Neither king nor magistrates grasped the determination of the other.[2] Resistance to the provisions of the Council of Trent stiffened, making relations worse. In Brabant, the provincial council referred the matter to the cities, whose

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[1] Erich Knutter, *Het Hongerjarr 1566* (Amsterdam: 1949).

[2] Knutter, *Hongerjarr*, 122–137; Jacques de Wesenbeke, *Mémoires* (Brussels: 1859), 123.

magistrates protested the potential imposition of inquisitions. The Council of State agreed, and at court Margaret assumed the awkward role of listening to summaries of discussions that Philip had forbidden in advance. Nevertheless circumstances and conditions dictated acceptance of local rather than royal views.

She had worse news to send to Madrid. The palace had reports of semi-secret meetings among aristocrats who maintained the associations created when they drafted the Compromise the previous year. A note of panic entered her accounts since she viewed all gatherings as possible sectarian conspiracies and worried about rumors telling of thousands of armed men ready to take advantage of any disorder. The popularity of the League of the Compromise made her fear it might repudiate the Spanish regime. The warnings came to her from the members of the Golden Fleece and she took them seriously. Orange was in a precarious position since loyalty to the king was the foundation of his official position, but his status and prestige made him a logical leader of the opposition. Some in the League spoke openly about seizing Antwerp, taking Margaret as hostage, and calling an Estates General. Orange wanted no part in an uprising and sought instead to gather the aristocracy to prepare a new petition asking for moderation.[3] However, Egmont, still smarting from the humiliation Philip had inflicted on him, wanted no part in such a petition, and others in the Order regarded it as a futile exercise. Margaret still wished to work closely with both men, but as attitudes hardened that became particularly difficult. Grim and worried, she lamented that she had not wished to fulfill her charge so badly, but chastised the king for ruining normal political life. Events and attitudes conspired to force a moment of truth at the Coudenburg Palace. Meetings between Margaret and the Council of State concluded that Philip had two options. First, arm the land and prepare for civil war. Second, remove the inquisition and the placards, the key complaints in the Compromise. In her own opinion the situation necessitated accepting the proposal of the aristocracy. She had not signed the Compromise, nor did she agree with all of its provisions, but she recognized it as an effort to maintain peace and order. If the king refused, she would be without support. Even the lords who remained with her could not guarantee the loyalty of their own retinues. In any event, she argued that the very idea of an inquisition disgusted both good and bad subjects,

[3] Iongh, *Madama, Marguerite van Oostenrijk, Hertogin van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 306.

and that the placards had failed to restore religious uniformity. She had no intention of stepping back from the faith, but would rather banish than kill those who did. Nor did she approve of confiscating the property of those exiled.[4] Margaret thus drew away from the orders of the king, leaving her stronger in the Netherlands but vulnerable in Madrid.

Orange helped, but offered hard advice in the Council of State. The people had no taste for inquisitions or for the placards with their grim penalties, he warned, and the prevailing attitude would prevent compliance with overly rigorous laws. He spoke plainly, regarding silence as irresponsible since people reacted so strongly to the king's refusal to abide by the oath to maintain the provinces and their privileges. Orange finally told her that he could not follow a royal policy that could only lead to an uprising or a civil war, and offered to resign his offices because of the contradictions between the king's orders and the demands of his own conscience.[5] Margaret responded with equal candor, telling him the king would not moderate his position, but asking him to stay at his public posts to avoid increasing the dangers facing her government.[6]

Philip's inaction increased those dangers. During 1565 Margaret's dispatches had met with indifference in Spain and the problem increased in 1566 when during the Lenten season Philip sent few letters and made no constructive remarks. A typical message told her to be sure to give good order to grain trade and financial affairs, a rather casual remark given the hunger and economic depression that gripped the provinces.[7] Since she remained fully in the middle of troubles that the king chose to ignore, Margaret once again took up the refrain of her regency: be moderate in an immoderate time. She acknowledged her own uncertainty and perplexity. Rumors abounded. One had the Elector of Brunswick raising troops for the king. A second claimed that the bourgeoisie of Antwerp had decided to join a league of aristocrats and to close the city. Yet another rumor spoke of a force of five hundred aristocrats accompanied by two thousand mounted men coming to Brussels to present the Compromise in the form of a petition. All reports, to Margaret's sorrow, had a basis in truth.[8]

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[4] *Correspondance française*, 1: 119. Margaret to Philip, 12 Jan, 1566.

[5] *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d'Orange* Gachard, ed. 6 vols. (Brussels: 1847–1866), 2: 106–110. Orange to Margaret, 28 January 1566.

[6] Reiffenberg, *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche, Duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II* (Brussels: 1842), 16 and 21–22. Margaret to Philip, 24 Jan. and 3 Feb. 1566.

[7] *Correspondance française*, 1: 121–125. 22 Jan. 1566.

[8] Ibid., 1: 128–132. Margaret to Philip, 24 Mar. 1566.

The court sensed danger at every turn, fearing both the gathering of the aristocracy and the royal reaction to it.[9] Margaret knew that her life was at risk and she felt quite alone in the midst of events utterly out of her control. There seemed to be no unprejudiced voices to give advice, and the palace became ever more isolated.[10] She had loyal followers and had appointed officers who would obey her more often than not, yet in the troubled months of 1566, some began to waver. Montigny, trying his best to maintain calm in Tournai without seeming to support the king, could and did disregard Margaret's orders. Calls to attend her at Brussels went unheeded, an example not lost on the people in Tournai and other troubled cities. The northern provinces exhibited an open spirit of independence. Margaret complained to Megen that the estates of Gelderland had convened at their own pleasure and formed a sworn league, something completely prejudicial to the service of the king. Even in disordered times, Margaret remained sensitive to the potential for loss of authority and respect. Should the estates in Gelderland successfully claim the right to arbitrate political differences, she feared they would gradually demand jurisdiction over all matters, terminating what little control the king exercised in the province.[11]

She also had news that some in the League were raising forces. In March she wrote, with trepidation, to Philip.

> As it is, over the past several days while affairs were under discussion, news came to me from Egmont and Megen that conformed to a similar message from the Prince of Orange, . . . of secret intrigues, conspiracies and leagues . . . that, it is said, are created by some sectarian gentlemen and others in great number, as many from the provinces over here as from outside, as Germany, England and France, . . . , and in the past eight days they have been plainly and undisputedly alerted that the conspirators have already retained their leaders and captains, and it would seem that their soldiers number twenty or thirty thousand or more, and that each day we must be alert to some fright which might be used as a pretext by some among them to seek to change princes.
>
> I have found that the impression Your Highness wants an inquisition and the rigorous application of the placards is so deeply rooted in the hearts of the people that it cannot be removed in any fashion whatsoever; as a consequence, after deliberating long and hard, the Council of State . . . has found no other present remedy but to do one of two things. The first is to take

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[9] G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere di G.B. Guicciardini a Cosimo e Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1577*, Battistine ed. (Brussels-Rome: 1949), 258–259.

[10] Iongh, *Madama*, 307.

[11] *Briefwisseling*, 148–9. Margaret to Megen, 9 Mar. 1566.

> up arms, which at this moment would be very difficult from lack of money and because there are enemies within the provinces and we do not know whom to trust, even among domestic servants, so that the lords, wishing to do their duty cannot know who might dare to defy them and who might wish to serve the king. When considered thoroughly, this way would despoil and ruin the land and religion would be lost. The second remedy would be to give in on some things, removing the inquisition which at present is so odious not only to the bad but also to the good and accomplishes virtually nothing because the sectarians are well enough known. At the same time, the placards would be moderated, not in such a way that would seem a drawing away from the holy Catholic faith, which all understand must be maintained to the very end without the least loss. After this, those who for the first time are found to be poorly disposed toward the faith would be banished from the lands over here and, should they return, their possessions would be confiscated unless they swore an oath . . . binding themselves to live strictly according to the holy Catholic faith and to maintain it to . . . the very end. At the same time, a general pardon would be issued for those who had mingled in the league in an effort to find some remedy for the troubles and who had joined only from fear of the inquisition and the rigors of the placards. By this means they can be drawn away.[12]

Consequently, she called on the Golden Fleece, asking them to gather in Brussels to discuss the raising of forces. Even though the leaders of the Order might be part of the problem she wanted resolved, the regent knew she had to discuss matters with them.[13] Council members had little hope that the king would follow their advice. All worried about the loyalty of officers, for Berghes reminded them that those who served had not been paid for months. He was equally frank about the futility of debating issues that the king had reserved for himself.[14] As the organization of the Confederates became more visible, attendance at the Council of State shrank. Only Egmont, Aerschot, Megen, and Berleymont attended the meeting of March 25. That was the moment Margaret chose to adopt her courageous and independent stance against all the forces arrayed against her. The situation was desperate and she seemed defeated, but she refused to surrender. She warned of the prospect of pillage of all property, rebellion against authority, and general disrespect. Despite the grim political climate, she minced no words with the representatives of Antwerp when they appeared before the council, charging the magistrates of that

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[12] *Correspondance française*, 1: 130–131. Margaret to Philip, 24 Mar. 1566; and Ibid., 2: 167–168. Margaret to Berghes and other members of the Golden Fleece, 21 Mar. 1566.

[13] G. Dumont, *Marguerite de Parme: Bâtard de Charles-Quint* (Brussels: 1999), 217–219.

[14] Berty, *Notules, BCRH*: 363. Mar. 1566.

powerful city with allowing it to become a center for conspiracy.[15] Pamphlets in Antwerp, she said, had leveled personal attacks accusing her of trying to trick people over the inquisition and the placards, a claim she regarded as wicked and seditious.[16] Equally harmful to her position was the indifference of the king. True to form, he reacted badly to her plight, assuming that she shared responsibility for the disobedience that came so easily to the Netherlands. Intransigent, he abhorred her advice and refused to consider any change or innovation.

In the background, the Confederates grew in power. Informal meetings evolved into organized sessions, with some of the Golden Fleece attending regularly. The largest gathering took place at St. Trond in Limburg and produced agreement on several issues and vague accords on others. Some of the resolutions gave heart to the Calvinists who attended; however, they confused an enthusiastic renunciation of Philip II with a substantive concern for the new religion. Aristocratic motivation remained impossible to define and the very name they selected, the Confederates, revealed a limited sense of unity.[17] Yet their discussions had produced agreement to gather at court to present a petition that was a shocking challenge to Margaret. She and the council dreaded the loss of dignity that was certain to follow their arrival. There was no question about the central issues. They feared the great crowd descending on Brussels even as they recognized the legitimacy of the issues raised in the petition. Members of the Council of State regarded an inquisition as a deformity in the public life of the Netherlands and they spoke with candor about the awful impact executions by fire had in society. While Margaret had never supported the gruesome penalties of the placards, she carefully avoided telling the king the details of that discussion. Thus even before the Confederates journeyed to Brussels, the Council of State had discussed their demands, the culmination of years of grievances against the king. However, the Confederates orchestrated a dramatic confrontation in which Margaret knew she would be powerless. Weakness required open negation of the inquisition and moderation of the placards, along with a galling admission that their provisions had always been contrary to reason and law. The council also knew that the Confederates expected Margaret

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[15] Jacques de Wesenbeke, *Mémoires* (Brussels: 1859), 137–171.

[16] *BCRH*, 11: pt. 2: 407. Letter of Margaret to the Council of Tournai, 4 Apr. 1566.

[17] Geoffrey Parker, *Dutch Revolt* (London: 1977), 68–70. A variety of meetings at St. Trond and among the members of the Order at Breda kept Margaret anxious and the Calvinists enthusiastic about the prospect of dramatic change in the commonwealth.

to appeal to the king for a full pardon. On March 27 the regent met with the Council of State and the Privy Council and requested full and frank advice on Confederate demands. She expressed a willingness to discuss anything short of a change in religion, but she was amazed with an additional demand requiring that no coercion or force should ever be used to maintain Catholicism.[18]

The members of the Order then withdrew and refused Margaret's plea for help. Left alone to face the petitioners, she wanted to either arrest the leaders or withdraw from Brussels, but Berlaymont and Mansfeld, who became her most important advisors as the great lords abandoned the court, asked her to ignore the turmoil and remain to receive the petition without incident. Privately, she expressed anxiety to Philip that they might come furnished with foreign support and that their acts might inspire other aristocratic groups and perhaps even the bourgeoisie.[19] Her fears seemed justified. Confederates gathered in Brussels over several days, during which time court life became anxious and unhappy. Hendrick van Brederode, the Confederate leader, cut a fine figure, staging events and demonstrations, playing to the sentiments of the people who clearly favored the flashy aristocrats. He was a combative, carousing man who quickly added members of the Brussels guard to his retinue. Brederode was hailed as the restorer of lost freedom. He and Louis of Nassau paraded about surrounded by hundreds of armed men. At one point Brederode appeared before the palace with two hundred mounted men, many from Brussels. After three days of such activity, he marched into the Coudenburg Palace audience hall at the head of three hundred aristocrats and formally presented an apprehensive Margaret with the following petition:

> It is acknowledged throughout Christendom that the people of the Netherlands have always been and still remain renowned for their loyalty to their lords and natural princes. The aristocracy has always stood in the first rank of those who would spare neither body nor goods for the preservation and increase of the grandeur of the crown. We, the humble vassals of His Majesty, wish to continue in this duty with our best efforts and we stand ready day and night to commit our lives and goods to his service. However, in view of the present state of affairs, we would rather risk attracting possible imputations of acting ungraciously than to conceal from Your Highness something that could result in a disservice to the king and also disturb the

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[18] *Correspondance française*, 1: 132–138. Margaret to Philip, 3 Apr. 1566; Berty, *Notules*, 364–366.

[19] *Correspondance française*, 2: 167. Margaret's notes on the disorders the Confederates could inspire.

> peace and tranquility of his provinces. We anticipate that results will show with time that all of the services that have ever been done or ever will be rendered in the future to His Majesty, this will be regarded as being among the most notable and appropriate. All of these reasons help us to be sure that Your Highness cannot but take this well. We are convinced that all the king has hitherto done and continues to do in this instant in issuing new ordinances concerning the inquisition and calling for strict enforcement of the placards on religious matters has some foundation in justice and only continues what the late Emperor Charles, of esteemed memory, had, with good intentions, promulgated. However, we see that the difference between one time and another is accompanied by equal diversity in remedies and that, in recent years, the placards (notwithstanding that they have been vigorously executed) have occasioned much grief and trouble. Certainly the recent resolution of His Majesty forbidding not only the moderation in any way of the aforesaid placards, but also his express command to give obedience to the inquisition and to implement the provisions of the placards completely, has given us just ground to fear that the troubles will thereby be augmented.[20]

Thus they asked Margaret to ignore the evil humors and bad will of the times and to agree to rid the land of the placards and the threat of an inquisition. Only moderation of religious policy could avert general sedition, riot, and total ruin. The people had changed and they asked her to adjust to new circumstances. The aristocrats themselves claimed to be vulnerable to attack from the people, but felt more threatened by the inquisition. Envious people would accuse them just to get their wealth and the law would remain silent. Margaret should suspend all persecution and agree to address religious difficulties with the advice and consent of the Estates General. The petition forecast dreadful bloodletting if the situation did not change.

Brederode swaggered to the front, casually holding the petition in his hand and gesturing with it. He rebuked the court for having a negative opinion of the movement. Full of pride and warm in the knowledge of popular support, Brederode wanted to be honored. Everything was carefully staged to focus attention on him. Even the effort of the loyal Berleymont to support Margaret by dismissing the petitioners as *gueux*, or beggars, turned out badly as the name and an elegant version of a beggar's bowl quickly became the Confederate symbol. In the initial encounter,

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[20] BN Manuscrit française 4897, fo. 124–128. *Copie de la Requète presentée par la noblesse du pays-bas à Madame de Parme . . .*; Pasquier de le Barre, *The Time of Troubles in the Low Countries: The Chronicles and Memoirs of Pasquier de le Barre of Tournai, 1559–1567*. C. Steen tr. and ed. (New York: 1989), 81–87.

Brederode attacked his opponents, particularly those identifying the Confederates as conspirators intent on robbery and pillage. He demanded that the accusers be reprimanded publicly. In addition, the Confederates sought to have the court pardon them and promulgate a sympathetic version of their motives.[21]

The entire public encounter on April 5 involved only petty issues, for Margaret had already submitted to the central demands of the petition. It was visible proof of the shift in power as the arrogant stance and words of Brederode dominated the session. He offered carefully calculated humble statements that scarcely matched his demeanor. Margaret could only stand there and weep. The Confederates took a long time to withdraw from the audience as they gave one studied reverence after another to Margaret. They then paraded once again through the streets of Brussels, rejoicing in themselves and in the petition. The Council of State gathered in a spirit of deep gloom.[22] Its deliberations showed how little power the court had at that moment. Some in Margaret's retinue sought to delay matters through legal ploys, such as requiring the signatures of all the Confederates on the petition, but the more thoughtful warned that meaningless maneuvering would only increase the popularity of the aristocrats. The Council of State, in agreeing to the petition, had adopted a position in opposition to the king, a terrifying fact to some at court who worried about Philip's response to ideas endorsing religious liberty. Orange and Hoorn reappeared, but their participation seemed calculated to make a statement of loyalty to the king rather than addressing the issues that threatened to overwhelm Margaret. As regent, she had to prepare a memorial acceding to all Confederate demands. She sent it to their leaders by personal emissary, Count Hoogstraten, a man already associated with the Compromise. Margaret asked only that he inquire whether the Confederates intended to maintain the Catholic religion. They unanimously declared for the faith, the one comfort she had in the dismal proceedings. In every other respect the formal encounter with the Confederates was a time of humiliation that eroded her public place and position.

Margaret felt compelled to prepare an *Apostille*, or Accord, the first of two that passed considerable power and initiative in public matters to the Confederates.[23] What little authority she previously had become nebulous

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[21] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 187–190; P.C. Hooft, *Nederlandse historien* (Antwerp: 1978) 28–33.

[22] Francesco Marchi, *Cento Lettere*, Ronchini ed. (Rome: 1864), 56–61.

[23] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 259–260; Iongh, *Madama*, 307–311.

and open to repeated challenges. Margaret knew full well the dangers of the Accord and entered into it as a realist, not an enthusiast. When a Confederate leader requested a proclamation asserting that they acted for the good of the land and the service of the king, she refused, saying time and their deeds would judge such a claim. Otherwise, she and her council could only deliberate the wording of their surrender. Officially, she claimed that such important matters had to be presented to the king, but allowed for immediate moderation of religious investigations. Margaret worried openly about suspending laws governing religion, fearing that the Confederates themselves might initiate innovations.[24]

Despite the impropriety of acting before the king gave his approval, she had to move quickly. Delay might occasion disastrous confrontation, opening the way for broader demands, including freedom of conscience. In her opinion, dangerous men among the Confederates had so intimidated magistrates and provincial officers that no one dared oppose them. Confederates were greeted with awe wherever they went and could manipulate popular sentiment, using it to support a declaration that nothing done by the king had validity unless the Estates General offered advice first. Margaret equivocated on some matters and caved in on others, hoping to maintain enough authority to enable a visit by Philip to set things right.[25] Yet that seemed a faint hope as Brederode grasped at every occasion to demonstrate his pleasure at having triumphed over her. He organized a banquet to fete his many followers. During the boisterous festivities, toasts were raised to the success of the "Schooie" or "Gueux" and they thereafter adopted the name Beggars. Orange and Egmont stopped by to welcome the visitors to Brussels and to join in the toasts.[26]

In order to know the aims and plans of the Confederates, Margaret persuaded one of them to keep the court informed. However, the Confederate organization remained loose and its purposes vague. Documents kept by the Calvinist Gilles Le Clerc that later fell into her hands showed clearly how followers of the new religion regarded the Confederates as partners in forthcoming changes. Louis of Nassau negotiated directly with Calvinist leaders and recommended confessional agreements with Lutherans to

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[24] Margaret published the Request and her comment 6 April 1566 so that an official version would be available to stop rumors and false versions.

[25] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 260–264; Archivio di Stato, Parma. Carteggio Farnesiano, (no folio numbers) contains correspondence from Italians at court relating to the dangers of the time for Margaret. Iongh, *Madama,* 312–327; F. Rachfahl, *Margaretha von Parma, Statthalterin der Nederelande 1559 bis 1567* (Munich: 1898).

[26] Anton van der Lem, *De Opstand in de Nederlanden (1555–1609)* (Leiden: 1995), 51–54.

Gar viel vom Adell auß Brabant
Den von Parma stellen zu handt
Zu Brussel ein supplication
Von wegen der Religion
Da in sein all sementlich
Begeren underthenigklich
Das die Religion sein frey
Ohn sewr, strick swerdt vnd tyranney
Anno Dnij. M. D. LXVI. V Aprilis.

Fig. 3. Confederates presenting their petition to Margaret of Parma, April 1566. Frans Hogenberg. British Museum.

strengthen their cause. Negotiations between Calvinists and aristocrats occurred at every level. The events of April and May 1566, simply culminated nearly a year of meetings and conferences, but nothing sounded an alarm about revolution in the documents.[27] The growth of enthusiasm for the Confederates and the rage to wear a fashionably crafted beggar's bowl to make a clear statement of opposition to church and crown made the Coudemburg Palace a somber place. Margaret became ever more anxious in the menacing environment, and no one could fail to notice that "Long Live the Gueux!" replaced "Long Live the King!" in the shouts of the townspeople.[28]

[27] *Correspondance française*, 3: 319–322. Summary of documents prepared for Margaret during the summer of 1567.

[28] *Het Geuzenliedboek*, 2 vols, E.T. Kuiper and P. Leendertz eds. (Zutphen: 1924) 1: 35.

Problems between Margaret and leaders of the Order became severe. They felt that the court blamed them for taking necessary and timely action. Orange asked to be allowed to withdraw, denouncing those at court who accused him of heading the Confederates. Furthermore, he had grown tired of the indifference of the king toward him. Hoorn joined him in lamenting serving a prince who had so little confidence in his servants. Some at court retorted that if Orange disliked being accused of Confederate sympathies, he ought not to have Brederode as a house guest at the Nassau Palace. Margaret harbored deep suspicions about Orange and Hoorn but dreaded the prospect that they would depart, one going here, the other there, leaving the government in shambles as she tried to govern alone. Thus she begged them to stay and asked the king to appease them, for in her words, what they did, all the other aristocrats would do also.[29] Margaret recognized that there was little chance that Philip would agree to that or to any of the other positions which she had been forced to adopt. Yet she knew that the Confederate proposals were so popular that they could become fact by word of mouth rather than royal proclamation.

2. *Fatal Mission to Madrid*

Margaret became distraught with the fear that everyone would abandon her. She begged council members to stay and ignore how the king dismissed their views. Following her custom in times of crisis, Margaret sought to inform Philip directly of the state of affairs by dispatching emissaries from the Golden Fleece. In 1566 she designated Montigny and Berghes to fulfill this task. Both had to be persuaded to take on the new duty.[30] The charges of Montigny in Tournai and Berghes in Valenciennes gave them experience with every aspect of the difficulties besetting the Netherlands. Their relations with her had at best been frosty, but they had worked hard to pacify and contain their unruly cities. While such efforts made them invaluable to Margaret, she did not realize that their labors to calm troubles without bloody repression had earned the two the hatred of Philip II. While she hoped that Montigny and Berghes would be able to convince Philip of the need for moderation, she actually dispatched them to grim deaths in Spain. Berghes died in prison of disease, but Philip had Montigny executed. Their sorry fate showed how little Margaret

[29] *Correspondance française*, 1: 138–142. Margaret to Philip, 13 Apr. 1566; Berty, *Notules* 376.
[30] Berty, *Notules*, 376–377. Meetings of the Council of State on April 9 and 10.

comprehended Philip's mentality, for she really believed that men of such stature could speak openly and bring back positive orders that would help to resolve the crisis. Perhaps she should have understood better, for an earlier embassy by Montigny had not proved fruitful, and the most recent by Egmont, had actually worsened relations. Nevertheless, Margaret remained committed to the principle that a natural relationship had to exist between the Lord of the Netherlands and his principal subjects.[31]

Furthermore, Margaret's dismay over the lack of information from Madrid made her eager to report directly. Her choices proved to be reluctant messengers. Berghes injured his leg in a sporting event and Montigny elected to wait for him to heal. Had they known what awaited them, the healing process would have been long indeed. The delay forced continuation of ordinary dispatches to Philip throughout the spring of 1566. Margaret described the situation as one in which too much religious liberty existed, but she dared not respond for fear of provoking additional deterioration in public affairs. The Council of State debated the issue in an atmosphere of pessimism. Viglius knew that ideas of toleration and moderation had such general popularity that people regarded them as a new fact of life. Orange had a different, negative view. He knew that Margaret lacked the authority to publish moderation as law and that the king detested such ideas. Royal displeasure would only make matters worse.[32] But Margaret desperately wanted a prompt resolution of the difficulties, fearing those who stood just behind the Confederates and who might undertake something to which she could not, at that time, respond. The court had information that many who had been previously banished for religious infractions had returned to their homes and that Calvinists printed what she regarded as seditious pamphlets without fear of interference from magistrates. She accepted the fact that her news would add to his fury, but begged Philip not to override any of her acts until he heard directly from Berghes and Montigny, who could explain the peculiar and dangerous "constitution" of affairs.[33]

Within the same context of uncertainty she asked the king to accept the debate she allowed over moderation of the placards. Each council and sitting estate received her request to discuss the placards, but little came

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[31] J. Brouwer, *Montigny, Afgezant de Nederlanden bij Philips II* (Amsterdam:1941), 1–51, summarizes all of the voyages of members of the Golden Fleece to Spain and provides details of the trip by Montigny and Berghes.

[32] Berty, *Notules*, 381. Meeting of 10 April 1566.

[33] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 190–191, 203 and 213–214.

from it. Directive power had clearly shifted away from those institutions. The Estates of Tournai and the Tournaisis met briefly on the matter and reported nothing to Margaret despite the number of churchmen present. The Estates of Hainaut came to a positive conclusion, stating that the placards would be enforceable once they were moderated by removing provisions on accusations and the seizure of property, practices contrary to existing law and custom.[34] Caught between those who would not enforce the horrifying penalties of the placards and a king who relished them, Margaret felt that she had to act since the Confederates gained new adherents, in the form of individuals and entire towns, each day.[35] With the same courier, Margaret sent along appeals for more money, despite her fear that repetitious demands by then disgusted Philip. Offering more precise figures than usual, Margaret showed how she fell behind as tax revenue diminished. Thus she turned to him, even though she knew of the huge cost he bore in defending Christendom.[36]

Philip answered none of her messages for weeks. In May, he responded to the questions posed in March. He reiterated his bland protestation that he never did anything to harm his subjects, modify their traditional practices, or introduce innovations. Nothing that she had written had made an impression, and he simply reaffirmed his determination to live and die a Catholic and not to tolerate any other religious opinion in his lands. Thus, any general moderation of the provisions of the placards would have to await his arrival, the first indication that he considered returning to the Netherlands. He did grant her the right to moderate enforcement of the placards, but transferred to her all the responsibility for what would follow. In general, he evaded her questions and affirmed his concept that as king he acted as the father toward his subjects, who always remained children. Nor did he take Margaret's plight seriously, offering only a mild rebuke for being slow to tell him of the Accord with the Confederates, for he already knew of its provisions. Philip ended with a vow to take care of everything personally.[37]

With only his vague promises to come to the Netherlands as a response, she became anxious for Berghes and Montigny to depart to discuss the

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[34] Archives d'État, Tournai. États de Tournai. Resolutions of the Estates, 24 May 1566; EA 244.1 for documents relating to Hainaut; *Correspondance française*, 2: 205. Act of the Estates of Hainaut, 5 May 1566. Dumont, *Marguerite*, 224 details their reception in Madrid.

[35] *Correspondance française*, 2: 170–174. Margaret to Philip, 4 May 1566.

[36] Ibid., 2: 174–175. Margaret to Philip, 4 May 1566.

[37] Ibid., 1: 142–144. Philip to Margaret, 6 May 1566.

"mutual diffidence" between Philip and the leading aristocrats. She could have claimed such a separation between not only the aristocrats and the king, but the whole of the Netherlands and the ruler who became far more remote than distance required. Margaret's own sentiments toward the provinces became less and less cordial, but she continued to think of her office as one that protected their interests. The Council of State worked with her to draft an instruction for her emissaries and agreed that the convocation of an Estates General was vital. Some in the council felt that Philip would have to agree to abide by its decisions, but others insisted that he only had to hear its advice. In addition to those unwelcome opinions, Orange raised the issue that Philip should start acting for the public good and should give Margaret the authority needed to deal with the tasks at hand. Berghes affirmed that view, saying that the plight of the court bred contempt for it and that the present discontent in the provinces illustrated grave constitutional problems.[38] Margaret hardly relished such discussion. In her view, even the provincial estates injected themselves too thoroughly into public affairs. When she asked for discussion of the situation in 1566, they did not inspire confidence because each responded with a different interpretation of the problem.[39] The frustration occasioned by their selfish reactions reinforced her determination to avoid the convocation of an Estates General, for the thought of the confusion of opinions in that body frightened her.[40]

3. *The Effects of the Accord*

Meanwhile, the confrontations over religion created problems in the provinces that placed greater burdens on the stadtholders. In Flanders, Rassenghien, warned of the spread of heresy, the publication of new heretical books, the scarcity of grains, and the flight of money. Disorder affected every aspect of life, and he noted uninhibited expression of many religious opinions that had as common ground only a dislike of Catholicism. The Accord had invited free expression and Margaret had to abide by its provisions, asking loyal Catholics not to criticize her or it.[41] The Calvinists were emboldened by the Confederates and swept forward, virtually

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[38] Berty, *Notules*, 385–387, April, 1566.
[39] *Correspondance française*, 2: 188–190. Margaret to Philip, 29 May 1566.
[40] Ibid., 1: 146–148. Margaret to Philip, 21 June 1566.
[41] EA 282, fo. 163. Rassenghien to Margaret, 13 May 1566.

unchallenged, to shatter what remained of religious order. Thousands attended sermons, partly because they had no work or food and sought distraction from misery. In response, some wealthy Calvinists began to distribute alms. Entire families attended field sermons, and the Calvinist enterprise began to take form as they organized locally for protection, poor relief, and education. Consistories were created in each area and represented a wholesale change in attitude toward religious and public life. A committee of elders and preachers, the consistories supervised the lives of the Calvinists and exerted considerable control. Many of the consistories adopted the names of the Chambers of Rhetoric, the literary societies that had been such an important part of local life and the spread of ideas of religious reform.[42] The fervent became confident that everything would now go their way. What the Confederacy had started, the townspeople would finish. They began to debate spreading the faith and cleansing the land of old practices and images. While there was no uniformity to the process, the Calvinists became much more assertive, with preachers speaking without restraint.[43] Catholicism retreated, offering no opposition and seeming incapable of modifying the unhealthy relationship it had with the people. Despite their best efforts the new bishops made no substantial changes in religious life. It fell to Margaret's commissioners and governors to deal with problems such as absenteeism, charging for the sacraments, and failure to fulfill functions properly. While the Catholic religious fabric remained intact, it had deteriorated and frayed, particularly in the commercial centers.[44]

The new religion posed a decisive challenge. Unwilling magistrates were the prime agents of repressive religious orthodoxy but lacked enthusiasm for persecution. Garrisons had to remain in the cities to give Margaret some leverage, but she could not fund the soldiers, and the decline in commercial affairs made the magistrates unlikely paymasters. Consequently, the forces that once numbered in the hundreds became reduced to pathetic remnants. Twelve men remained in Valenciennes and forty in Tournai. By the summer of 1566, magistrates, hardly towers of strength in their own communities, bickered with Margaret over responsibility, but

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[42] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 228–229.

[43] Iongh, *Madama*, 313–314; P.M. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands* (Cambridge: 1978), 144–150.

[44] EA 282, fo. 126–127. Rassenghien to Margaret, Jan. 1566; EA 353, fo. 56. Margaret to Montigny, 28 Jan. 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 18–21; Viglius, *Sur le regne de Philippe II* in *Mémoires*, Wauters ed. (Brussels: 1858), 120–137.

both parties had to temporize, a situation that rendered absurd any plans to curtail Calvinist activities.[45] Each order that Margaret issued combined caution and command. She wanted troops, but the forces often remained under the control of aristocratic powers hostile to her. Philip wrote to tell her to do whatever she deemed necessary to preserve the honor of God at royal expense, but money did not accompany words. The growing civil strife in France presented a telling example of what could develop in the Netherlands. Frightened by the degeneration of order in that realm, Margaret longed to isolate the Netherlands from it. However, the border fortifications had decayed and most of the garrisons had received no pay for months. The plight of the soldiers served to heighten her apprehension. In her opinion, public affairs could not have slipped into more dangerous circumstances. Throughout the spring she heard reports of secret assemblies in cities and villages. They seemed to be everywhere, and duplication of information may well have exaggerated their number. Vague, nebulous reports in an unpropitious time made everything seem threatening. She dreaded the prospect of a unified religious opposition, for to her the public good would suffer just as surely as the faith. However, it was impossible to separate conspiracies among sectarians from gatherings of merchants, and apprehension clouded perception.[46]

Reports flooded into Brussels of field sermons, assemblies, meetings of consistories, the publication of posters and books, and, most ominous to Margaret, challenges to Catholic services. The bishop of Tournai became frantic in his relation of activities contrary to "God and reason," including:

> . . . assemblies attended by nearly three thousand men of this new religion, with most bearing arms or truncheons, which you can learn more about in the reports and complaints of the vicars living close to the places where conventicles were held. . . . Being warned that these assemblies will continue and with even greater numbers, already the village vicars are ready to quit their charges because this intolerable license has already excited the people over here to such a state of rebellion that we can anticipate nothing other than pillage and the utmost brutality against our persons and goods from men who deny our saintly faith.[47]

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[45] *Correspondance française*, 1: 117–119. Margaret to Philip, 11 Jan. 1566.

[46] EA 282, fo. 153–154. Report of the magistrates of Aire, 16 Apr. 1566. This volume and EA 353 contain a variety of reports from Flanders and Tournai relating to the decline in religious and public order.

[47] *Correspondance française*, 2: 231–232. Bishop of Tournai to Margaret, 2 June 1566. Similar reports are in EA 244.1. Correspondence of Margaret with the cities and governors, Jan.–July 1566; see also EA 244.5, no folios. Correspondence between Margaret and the officials of Tournai, 1566.

The magistrates of Tournai reported disorders among rowdy youths who divided into groups and adopted the names Huguenots, Papists, and Beggars ("*hughenaulx, papistes, et ghueulx*"); they forbade name calling, along with singing and dancing in the streets.[48] Rassenghien in Lille and the commander of the citadel in Tournai, Moulbais, reported masses of people at sermons and wanted to administer prompt and harsh remedies. Those who flocked to Calvinist assemblies believed themselves a majority that enjoyed protection from the highest aristocrats.[49]

Margaret feared the "proper remedy" might create greater hazards. She urged a limited attack, aimed at arresting individual preachers or stopping the organization of sermons in the house of a wealthy member of the bourgeoisie of Valenciennes. She wrote to the magistrates of Audenarde to encourage full prosecution of a man who interrupted a mass and threw the host to the ground. His dramatic witnessing for his belief doomed him, but the large number of residents of Ypres who paraded through the town after hearing a sermon had the protection of their numbers. Margaret only reminded the magistrates that it would be best for them if the king remembered Ypres fondly. Her policy clearly called for containing what her court called "Calvinist" activity wherever it involved small numbers, while steadfastly ignoring the larger manifestations.[50]

When local authorities did take the initiative, Margaret eagerly awaited the information they gathered. A lieutenant of the garrison at Lille investigated field sermons held in the rural parish of Bondues. He reported well-dressed people of all ages spending long hours singing psalms while waiting for a preacher, who then delivered a two-hour sermon, ending with a cry for services in the cities. Other sermons took place in the area at the end of May, and between two hundred and two thousand persons attended. The larger gatherings had the protection of pike-bearers who massed around the women and children, giving the appearance of a "forest of batons" surrounding the preacher. The preachers also led the people in prayers for the king and the magistrates, asking God to enable them to see the true faith. The bishop of Tournai expressed fear for himself and for all other churchmen. In the villages, priests abandoned their parishes under threat, or stayed to find their services shunned. Not only did many people prefer sermons, but numbers of others abandoned all religious

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48 *BCRH*, 12: 95–96. Ordinance, 10 June 1566.

49 *Correspondance française*, 2: 223–226. Rassenghein to Margaret, 7 June 1566.

50 EA 282, fo. 174 and 180–200. Rassenghein to Margaret and Egmont, and reports of magistrates of Ypres, Audenarde and Furnes concerning disorders, June 1566.

services for cabarets and ball games. Priests reported mockery, insolence and irreverence on every side. When the priest of Ferlinghehem chided the villagers, they offered to throw him into the River Lys. Ten priests related similar stories to the bishop.[51]

By the end of June, in much of the south and in the maritime provinces of the north, thousands flocked to assemblies. Confidence tended toward audacity. Sensing the prospect of religious liberty, people openly announced their new faith and felt confident that the king would modify public policy to their liking. This further weakened Margaret's ability to govern and devastated local magistrates trapped between a duty to maintain order and vast numbers of quite reputable citizens determined to recast religious and public life. Clearly, followers of the new religion were already members of every major institution of the cities and had created a network they thought represented cooperation but that Margaret regarded as conspiracy.[52] The governors candidly reported how the Calvinists armed and intimidated Catholics, who withdrew from public affairs, leaving the field to the aggressive reformers. After all, the Calvinists claimed the support of the aristocracy, offering the initiatives of the Confederates to substantiate their position.[53]

Margaret's reports of conventicles, the basic organization of Calvinist congregations, and sermons hid nothing from Philip. She clearly detailed nocturnal meetings, heavily attended sermons presented by those she deemed "dogmatic heretics," and the grave threat of civil war. Her aim was to obtain a general pardon, which would help her to contain Calvinist activities. Most troubling was their inclination toward the convocation of a general synod, which she feared would merge the desperate troubles of the Netherlands with those of France. In her assessment, people felt unrestrained by law, and some advocated evil acts and sedition. Yet she could not call on the aristocrats to help her, for they refused to raise troops to protect the inquisition and the placards. The soldiers in the fortifications had become undependable because their pay was still long in arrears. Near starvation, many soldiers began to live off the land, adding

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[51] *Correspondance française*, 2: 226–228 and 232. Report of the lieutenant of the Governor of Lille, 28 May and 1 June 1566 and testimony given to the Bishop of Tournai, 29 May 1566.

[52] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 97 for the situation in Tournai.

[53] EA 282, fo. 201–202. Rassenghein to Margaret, 29 June 1566; EA 353, fo. 59–67. Correspondence of Margaret and officials in Tournai, June 1566; *Briefwisseling*, 130–166. Correspondence between Margaret and Megen; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 298–291; Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 148–152.

another measure of distress. She feared they would join with sectarians in Béthune, Cambrai, Douai, Flushing, and the isle of Walckeren. Margaret reported all this to Philip as a plea for money and a royal pardon, the first of many requests for clemency that would follow.[54]

4. *The Grip of Calvinism*

By June the situation was desperate. The numbers of sermons astounded observers and had a momentous effect on all public life, as chronicled by Pasquier de la Barre.

> The magistrates expressed astonishment at the fervor and commitment of the people to the sermons. They could think of no way to prevent and reprove the assemblies and sermons. That notwithstanding, the magistrates, in order to fulfill their charge and office, summoned some individuals who had been present at the sermon and queried them about its tenor. However, after holding these people until evening, the magistrates let them go home out of fear that the other residents who had been in attendance would rise up and that the investigation would provoke some sort of riot or scandal.[55]

Margaret dreaded the prospect that the assertive Calvinists would begin to discuss taxes and justice, affairs "that . . . must not depend on the judgment of the common populace." Actually she hated having even bourgeois involvement in the process, believing that their political competence should only extend to discussion of taxation, especially after, in Brabant, "evil spirits" within the commons demanded the right to discuss religion.[56]

During the early summer of 1566, Margaret had to temporize. With neither royal advice nor assistance, the regime tottered on the brink of bankruptcy in the midst of growing religious fervor.[57] Reports of sermons in which preachers such as Pierre Corneille and Ambroise Wille in Tournai criticized the "idolatrous papists" and their practices unsettled Margaret, as did Calvinist claims to have converted whole cities, including Tournai and Armentières. The methods and messages of the preachers differed widely, as did the quality of the reports on their activities. Still undefined in practice and theology and without a cohesive institutional structure,

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[54] *Correspondance française*, 2: 209–214. Margaret to Philip, 21 June 1566.
[55] Le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, 99; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 265–266.
[56] *Correspondance française*, 1: 146–148. Margaret to Philip, 21 June 1566.
[57] Ibid., 2: 214–222. Letters of Margaret to Philip and one to Hopperus urging him to plead with the king for a quick reply, 21 June 1566.

Calvinism followed extraordinarily diverse paths during the summer of 1566. No single preacher led the Calvinist church, and no unique vision invigorated the followers. Geneva and its schools guided individuals, and local congregations, classis, consistories, and synods gave form to general tenets of belief. However, absolute confessional unity and articles of faith eluded the reformed faithful, among whose members the lingering threat of persecution often guided conduct. Calvinists became visible to outsiders only when taking action or hearing a sermon. Hence they became the source of extravagant rumors and stories, and Margaret came to believe that she faced a vast conspiracy dedicated to upending the established church and commonwealth simultaneously.[58]

The chances of civil war seemed to grow with each day. Calvinist assemblies intensified in fervor and scope of activity as baptisms and marriages followed sermons, first in Tournai and Lille, and then virtually everywhere. Margaret hoped that the magistrates of all cities would awaken to the danger that assemblies and sermons harbored numbers of undesirable people who would undo all the powerful and wealthy of the land. In her mind, pillage and robbery lurked on the fringes of sermons, but her warnings showed too much hysteria to be credible, and magistrates knew that most people at the sermons were ordinary citizens who were venting outrage against the old religion, not against property.[59] Occasionally Margaret had a victory to report, but only against a depressing background of repeated reverses. Antwerp became more ardently Calvinist, with sermons in both French and Flemish by early July, but Margaret could report that at least Ghent confronted the new religion. Its magistrates successfully disrupted a field sermon, a deed that earned them high public praise at court. However, Antwerp remained friendly territory for Calvinism. Not all citizens felt content with the situation, and some magistrates asked Margaret if she would come to the city to help to restore order. The regent hesitated, wanting more information about disorders there before placing herself at their mercy.[60]

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[58] P. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching*, 107–139.

[59] EA 282, fo. 208–223. Reports of huge Calvinist assemblies in Aire, Arras, Bondues, and Audenarde with added comments on the anger of unpaid troops and the influence of events in France, 1–7 July 1566.

[60] *Correspondance française*, 2: 240–243. Margaret to Philip, 4 July 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 1: 291; *Documents pour servir à l'histoire des troubles religieux du XVI^e siècle dans la Brabant septentrional. Bois-le-Duc (1566–1570)* P. Cuypers van Velthoven ed. (Brussels: 1858), 12; Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 252–254.

In general the situation remained perilous and miserable. The news she had to send to Philip became so consistently bad that she regarded additions as superfluous. Considerable changes were visible; previously she had limited authority, but in the summer of 1566 she had scarcely any, for only a few men remained steadfast in her service. With sadness and anguish Margaret reported that she had no remedy for the frequent sermons, many of which the preachers advertised in advance. The councils believed that collapse was at hand and that only an Estates General could effect the compromises necessary to avert disaster. Indeed, the Calvinists dominated through sheer effrontery and those who frequented assemblies had in her view, lost all sense of obedience and order. Margaret saw popular passions and action just under the surface of religious fervor. She continued to blame foreigners, especially the French, but she also chastised the king for failure to deal promptly with her request for a general pardon, her alternative to confusion and desolation. His recalcitrance had nurtured deep suspicion about his plans and a sentiment that he desired to act harshly against the provinces.[61]

In response, preachers took the initiative in Tournai, Middlebourg, Lille, and a dozen other cities and towns. Ambroise Wille made himself dominant in Tournai, where Margaret sensed that "bad" subjects outnumbered the "good." In Antwerp, the Calvinists publicly demanded land for construction of their own temple. Margaret had to give thought to the security of Brussels and to her own safety as Calvinists made their presence felt. Margaret ordered the troops of Bossu, Arschot, and Berlaymont to serve as her personal guard. Fear led her to refuse to go to Antwerp, and Orange went instead. In her view, a crowd of foreigners, soldiers, vagabonds and troublemakers kept her away. Actually, she probably would have encountered direct demands for change from a large and confident Calvinist group, adamant about obtaining rights and privileges commensurate with their popularity. Tournai's magistrates detailed the need for order and strict observation of the law but told Margaret candidly "such order cannot be achieved by us."[62] The specter of freedom of religion terrified her along with the problems arising from the impoverishment of the people resulting from the cessation of trade. In short, the commonwealth

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[61] *Correspondance française*, 2: 244–249. Margaret to Philip, 7 July 1566; Berty, *Notules*, 408–412.

[62] EA 353, fo. 68. Magistrates of Tournai to Margaret, 2 July 1566.

faced danger from every quarter and she could only end what she styled as unhappy accounts with pleas for money and royal action.[63]

Throughout July, 1566, Margaret received ever more distressing news. In Flanders small assemblies in houses and large ones in the fields demonstrated the new level of Calvinist organization. At Gorgue sermons began to end with demonstrations before local churches and the Bishop of St. Omer encountered Calvinists in his parishes when he attempted to introduce changes called for by the Council of Trent. When confronted, many people freely admitted their conversion to Calvinism, even calling themselves Huguenots, but the Council of Artois forbade prosecution. The bishop and Rassenghien stood alone in Lille. Only a few loyal aristocrats offered to help, while others clearly lent their armed support to the Calvinists. Rassenghien said that even if she had troops at hand, any movement of them would only spawn conflict. Margaret hoped he could prevent conventicles and synods, but the enormous sermons held near Tournai showed how little control she and her agents had. The magistrates thought of locking the people in the city, but the magnitude of the numbers involved made the idea absurd.[64]

The effect of the Calvinists on urban government amazed her. During the early summer she had continued to expect magistrates to fulfill their functions. After all, it seemed reasonable for them to stand up to protect their towns, wealth and families. But they became ever more reluctant to participate in the mounting of a guard, a grim fact that made danger the common property of all. The preacher Corneille's sermons counseled the people to moderation, warning them to await their time. He wanted no action beyond simple profession of religious belief. If they suffered arrest, it would be for the profession of faith and he assured them that they would be rescued before any harm could befall them. Such calm assurances infuriated Rassenghien, but he could do nothing since he lacked even a force to protect the coming harvests and he feared that the Calvinists would seize the fields to incite trouble.[65] Margaret corresponded frankly and directly with Rassenghien, Moulbais, and other commanders of fortifications. In contrast, her correspondence with areas where she had no troops seemed

[63] *Correspondance française*, 2: 243. Margaret to Philip, 7 July 1566.

[64] Ibid., 2: 235–237. Report of the governor of La Gorgue and of Gerard de Hamericourt, Bishop of St. Omer, 11 June 1566; EA 282, fo. 201. Rassenghien to Margaret, 29 June 1566; EA 353, fo. 60–64. Documents relating to Tournai, June 1566.

[65] *Correspondance française*, 2: 250–252. Rassenghien's reports to Margaret and her response, 29–30 June 1566.

equivocal and timid. As sermons came closer to Tournai, Margaret fretted about the inaction of the magistrates, but cautioned Moulbais not to try to search houses for the preachers or even for arms. The magistrates added that the preacher, Wille, publicized his sermons and boasted of the important people who sponsored his activities and the fifty thousand men they controlled. In those uncertain times, the magistrates did not know whom to believe, and they demonstrated their equivocal nature by dispatching to Brussels a member of a leading Calvinist family to report on their plans for mastering the situation. In essence, they wanted her to know that the number of Calvinists adherents made them an irresistible force in Tournai. The magistrates wanted her to accept the Calvinist reality, but she preferred a stout heart and good works as an antidote to the audacity of the new religion.[66]

However, in towns where loyal forces remained, she ordered commanders to resist all petitions and demands put forth by "malignant, turbulent and seditious" people. These included both Calvinists and Confederates, already called Beggars among the populace. The term Beggar entered the regent's correspondence in July. While avoiding confrontation, Margaret distanced herself from the Confederates. Yet she faced great danger if she ignored them since they had force and she did not. The regime's firm words did not pay the wages of soldiers and her captains reported an unheard of outspokenness among their men, an attitude akin to the freedom of expression in religious matters.[67] The painful facts for Margaret during the awful summer months when she had to witness the increasing poverty of her meager forces all indicated decline and collapse. Calvinists armed and challenged magistrates in Tournai and Valenciennes, demanding their cooperation and brazenly claiming to have authority to arm and organize from members of the Order, or even from the regent herself. They presented petitions which, if granted, would have wholly changed the nature of city government, making rule and religion subject to popular will. The Lille Calvinists also presented a petition claiming that God had seen fit to fill them with truthful sentiments and they wished to enjoy public worship and to take their proper place in life.[68] That petition

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[66] EA 353, fo. 65–72. 2–6 July 1566; *BCRH*, 12: 96–97. Ordinance prohibiting sermons, 3 July 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 63–87.

[67] EA 282, fo. 228 and 244. Letters of Margaret and of one of her captains, 9 and 12 July 1566. Margaret lamented that the king "had not turned his quickest hand" to the payment of soldiers, and her captain told her that poverty and religious license put words in his soldier's mouths.

[68] EA 282, fo. 248–258. Reports of Rassenghein, 13–20 July 1566.

lacked the ominous character of the one presented to the governor of Courtrai. It repeated denunciations of idolatry delivered by their preacher. He had told the people to go beyond purging their hearts of idolatry and to see to external things as well. The petition thus calmly forecast the sacking of churches and destruction of images, presenting it as a necessary task.[69] The preacher Ambroise Wille heightened tension with a petition to the magistrates of Tournai in which he blamed disorder on the forces of order and claimed that the critics of Calvinism blasphemed and had to be punished.[70]

Margaret expressed horror at all the demands. She ordered the commander of Tournai's citadel, Moulbais, to add some soldiers to his force, bringing it to one hundred and fifty men, and to repair the walls. Meanwhile, the magistrates were timid witnesses to more frequent sermons and ceremonies, and they took seriously the preacher's threat to release prisoners. They called forth the city militia, which swore to protect the king, but not to prevent sermons.[71] In contrast, large numbers of people in Lille joined a militia to prevent popular riot, settling on service to Catholicism and king. The pitiful state of the unemployed confused the issue, heightening religious fervor and tension at the same time.[72] The absence of loyal troops made other confrontations disastrous. Margaret wrote to her former secretary Hopperus in Madrid, encouraging him to spur Philip to action. She said that the provinces were on the point of ignition. Emboldened Calvinists were buoyed by increasing aristocratic support, saying that the resolution of all matters would come from a new meeting of the Confederates being held at St. Trond. Margaret heard reports of hundreds of aristocrats gathering to debate religious affairs. The Calvinists discussed gathering in a synod and staying in permanent assembly until the aristocrats had finished their discussions.[73] The St. Trond meeting ended her hopes to contain the situation. Calvinists regarded it as a sign of their triumph. It also infuriated the king and weakened Margaret's position since she continued to deal with people he regarded as seditious and prone to heresy. None of the great aristocrats attended, but they ignored her pleas to check the behavior of their followers who did. She asked

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[69] Ibid., fo. 256. Report of Ferdinand de la Barre, 17 July 1566.

[70] EA 353, fo. 74–76. Reports from Tournai, 7 and 8 July 1566.

[71] Ibid., fo. 77–79. Magistrates of Tournai to Margaret, 11 July 1566; *BCRH* 11 (pt. 2): 408–409. Registers of the Council of Tournai.

[72] EA 282, fo. 273–275. Letters of Margaret and Rassenghien, 25–26 July 1566.

[73] *Correspondance française*, 2: 258–264. Margaret to Philip, 19 or 29 July 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 100; Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 255.

Orange and Egmont to intervene in an effort to have the Confederates affirm the original Accord, drop their demand for an Estates General, and curb the preachers who encouraged the "unbridled commons." Margaret said they had to act immediately, or else the provinces would be prey to "barbarians, foreigners and a fanatical populace." Audacity had displaced discussion, formerly the heart of public life, and that had to end.[74]

She also wrote to the ecclesiastical leaders to ask for their active assistance in reaffirming traditional doctrine and belief in a hierarchy of power and wealth. In writing to the Archbishop of Cambrai, she spoke of the wolves that had appeared in the midst of his flock and called on him to act, making the same effort to save the flock as the others did to devour it.[75] Most churchmen did not respond with enthusiasm and never attempted to address the Calvinist challenge, even as those who attended field sermons grew more outspoken. Already she had reports of Calvinist bands going from place to place soliciting money and giving poor relief. In the cities this seemed voluntary, but in the countryside it often resembled extortion, since failure to donate resulted in threats of pillage in the days to come. One grain merchant near Béthune drove people off with pistol shots, decrying them as thieving peasants. But in most cases, people acquiesced, allowing the Calvinists to do their will. Near Ghent the Calvinists took over a fair, combining business with sermons and vowing not to leave until they knew what had transpired at St. Trond. They ended the affair peacefully when the great changes they had expected did not transpire, but their preacher thereafter claimed to act with the approval of the Golden Fleece.[76]

The decaying situation challenged her ability to relate her feelings to Philip. In all of the principal cities and towns she saw sedition and even revolt causing unspeakable harm. The huge sermons held near Antwerp and the armed escort that accompanied the people back to the city represented her worst fears. The magistrates admitted they could barely prevent sermons within the walls, but they still wanted Margaret to come to Antwerp to mollify the merchants, some of whom worried about their own safety. Of course, they wanted her to come without soldiers and with the goal of establishing peace. She had doubts about putting herself at the mercy of what she considered to be an aberrant commune and continued

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[74] *Correspondance française*, 2: 265–269. Memoir for Orange and Egmont, 12 July 1566.
[75] Ibid., 2: 294–295. Margaret to the Archbishop of Cambrai, 21 July 1566.
[76] EA 282, fo. 260–275. Reports from Ghent, Béthune and Furnes along with letters of Rassenghien, 22–26 July 1566.

to depend on Orange, knowing that he could not prevent assemblies, but hoping that he might avert riot. The Calvinists became determined to build a new temple and to be granted rights like those of the Augsburg Confession in Germany or the agreements obtained by the Huguenots in France. She refused to discuss such accords, fearing that debate would encourage a totally destructive sense of liberty. The Confederates had a strong presence in the city since Brederode resided there and negotiated with magistrates from previous years, all of which gave the appearance of his forming a shadow government. To offer some balance, Margaret ordered Megen, called in from Gelderland, to remain nearby, which made the Calvinists worry that she would try to put troops in Antwerp.[77]

The magistrates, increasingly uncomfortable, asked her to recall both Brederode and Megen. As a vocal and visible opponent of the Calvinists, Megen had earned their active dislike. He delighted in working against the new religion, even suborning a lawyer attached to the Confederates, promising him a future appointment to the Council of Brabant in exchange for information on the sessions at St. Trond. However, Megen posed a future danger, and Brederode's presence made the Calvinists very aggressive. When she finally convinced Orange to resume his duties in Antwerp, the Calvinists, to his displeasure, greeted him as a Confederate on his arrival.[78] The prince immediately began to negotiate with the Calvinists, who demanded the right to offer sermons in the city. Even though the Calvinists gave the impression of dominating Antwerp, the pacification proposal advanced by Orange sought to establish a middle ground, acknowledging Calvinism but moderating its demands in the interests of peace. In the proposal Orange had the whole of Antwerp's society in view, reminding the magistrates of their obligations to the regent and to the king, but never calling the city aberrant or rebellious. Orange tried to accommodate the effects of change, not repress them. Suddenly worried by his efforts, Margaret confused the issue by issuing an ordinance forbidding sermons, thus steadfastly ignoring the work that he had accomplished for her.[79]

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[77] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 245.

[78] *Briefwisseling*, 151–152. Megen to Margaret, 24 July 1566; Orange arrived 14 July to cries of "Vive les Gueux;" *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 136–137. 14 July 1566; Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 249.

[79] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 138–147. Letters of Orange and Margaret, 15 and 17 July 1566.

Affairs also became worse in Tournai where, in the view from Brussels, bad subjects dominated. Only troops could provide a remedy, but their use would require both discretion and Philip's help.[80] Margaret tried to raise troops quietly since the Calvinists had announced that for each unit she commissioned, they would raise ten. However, the new force remained far too small to deal with places like Tournai, where Calvinists armed and preached at will and even threatened to force the release of their brethren being held prisoner.[81] Margaret knew of similar developments in Valenciennes and Lille, and the Calvinists of Armentières actually broke the prison, demonstrating to her contempt for faith, law, and the force of monarchy. The Council of State had demanded that she call an Estates General to deal with the threat to the commonwealth posed by the Confederates. Since many Confederates remained at St. Trond, the issue had urgency. Thus she begged Philip to grant a twenty-five day session for the Estates, since the alternative seemed to be civil war, even though she feared the prospect that the Calvinists might effect total change in religion. In the uncertain summer months of 1566, she noted that people felt no restraint and spoke their mind, slandering him, her, and anyone else who did not suit their humors. Every sort of pamphlet, poster, and news broadside, many packed with falsehoods, appeared. Margaret herself made every effort to preserve an atmosphere of moderation at court, although she privately acknowledged it as a facade covering her fears.[82]

The troubles also increased her financial plight; a situation that she reminded Philip had been her lot from the moment she assumed the governance of the Netherlands. Since she had no money from him, she turned to the church, which could only give her bonds. However, these could not be sold in Antwerp since the disorders had intimidated the merchants who did not want to seem to support the government.[83] As a consequence, Margaret became desperate in her appeals to Philip, knowing that only troops would preserve what fragile order remained. However, Philip had many other problems, limited funds, and little interest in Margaret's proposal. Her meager forces during the summer precluded success in any policy originating in Brussels, and she fell silent in the face of many

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[80] EA 353, fo. 74–75. Letter of Ambroise Wille to the magistrates of Tournai, 7 July 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 84–87.

[81] EA 353, fo. 83. Magistrates of Tournai to Margaret, 13 July 1566.

[82] *Correspondance française*, 2: 263–264. Margaret to Philip, 29 July 1566; Renon de France, *Troubles des Pays-Bas*, Piot ed., (Brussels:1886), 1: 191; *Histoire des troubles à Valenciennes, 1566–1567*, 4 vols. (Brussels: 1874–1876), 4: 257.

[83] *Correspondance française*, 2: 264–265. Margaret to Philip, 29 July 1566.

troubling reports. Margaret heard how the Calvinists bedeviled the magistrates of Ypres by announcing their return from sermons with gunfire and singing. They also appeared in groups before the houses of magistrates, singing psalms and demonstrating their strength.[84] Without funds, Margaret could not respond. She knew that nothing worked to restore order better than a small garrison. Until she had troops, she had to, as her loyal commander Noircarmes said, do what one could rather than what one wished.[85]

Margaret needed the firm political collaboration of Philip. Had she relied on local authorities and institutions, the price would have been changes in law and religion, an elaboration of the policy circumstances forced on her by the Accord with the Confederates. Her personal goal remained measured compromise, but that required Philip's help. She never anticipated that war and repression would result from her request for that help. Clearly the king's fury over disorders and heresy in lands in his charge exceeded the bounds of her imagination. Philip had her letters and the personal views and reports of Montigny and Berghes on their arrival in Spain. In another letter from Segovia Woods at the end of July he acknowledged all she had written and what the emissaries had told him. His response reiterated his hard position of the previous year, again seeing the root of the problem, not in the harshness of placards and inquisitions, but in their incomplete and improper implementation. He claimed to have a particular obligation to the faith, and his subjects had a duty to obey him and to allow an inquisition to guide them.

> Therefore, to respond to . . . the point of the inquisition, I weighed the importance of the issue and found that it is the sole remedy which, from time immemorial and according to canon and civil law as well as scripture and natural reason, the church has used to make everyone live and act according to its commandments.

Without the control of the inquisition and the penalties of the placards "heretics and sectarians . . . will . . . aspire to absolute freedom of religion." That was an unthinkable concession to him as was discussion of public and religious matters in the estates and councils. Everyone had to accept the placards because heresy could not be tolerated. Philip stood firm on the part that rankled his subjects the very most, informants whose duty to God inspired them. Likewise, he insisted on continuing the seizure of the

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[84] EA 282, fo. 284–290. Reports from Ypres, Lille and Bruges, 30 July 1566.
[85] *Correspondance française*, 2: 298. Noircarmes to Margaret, 21 July 1566.

property of those convicted, claiming that heretics had no property rights whatsoever. However, he did promise to consider empowering Margaret to issue a limited pardon provided that those embraced by its provisions promised to live as Catholic and loyal subjects and to abandon leagues and covenants. Royal authority and the Catholic faith must suffer no diminution from anything that Margaret did. To secure the provinces, he did send her money and promised to furnish funds for whatever forces she required, but he spoke only vaguely of a trip to the Netherlands and forbade the convocation of an Estates General. Thus Margaret received only a modest part of what she had requested and none of the powers that would have enabled her to effect a compromise.[86]

By the end of July, Margaret had substantial evidence of the high level of preparedness of Calvinist forces. They had established procedures for collecting money and had confronted authorities at every level with petitions for formal recognition and for permission to build their own places of worship. To Margaret, such intrusions by a new and illegal force violated all conventions and customs; their shameless behavior caused loss of respect for authority and hierarchy. Since they acknowledged no restraints, she feared that the Calvinists would join in the sacking of churches and the pillage of towns, and she had no means of stopping them. In what must have been an odd note in many towns, Margaret ordered Catholic churches to have special prayers, processions, and services and to use all their relics and statues in a plea for divine intervention. Thus at the very height of Calvinist popularity, Margaret demanded a show of zeal that caused only echoes in empty churches. She also required the magistrates to proclaim new edicts against sermons, assemblies, and Calvinist practices not specifically allowed in the Accord. The demand made magistrates stand before hostile crowds to proclaim unenforceable laws.[87]

The great increase in the number of people attending sermons diminished hopes of a peaceful settlement. In Antwerp, the open push to change the religious order threatened her relationship with Orange and further diminished her in Philip's eyes. The Calvinist organization grew more obvious as a group of merchants who had converted joined magistrates in the discussion of public policy.[88] All parties in Antwerp asked to have Orange remain in charge, and his moderate position seemed to favor the

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[86] Ibid., 2: 269–274. Philip to Margaret, 31 July 1566. Translations from pp. 269–270.

[87] *Correspondance française*, 2: 280–287. Margaret to Philip, 31 July 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 120–121.

[88] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 154–155. William to Margaret, 25 July 1566.

Calvinist cause. As Calvinists began to carry weapons to sermons, Orange organized a militia but tacitly agreed with the magistrates, who wanted the king to issue a general pardon for religious offenses and to convene an Estates General. In their optimism, the magistrates produced a series of petitions that called for accepting religious change. Furious, Margaret had to remain silent from fear of testing the loyalty of the Prince of Orange.[89]

In all cases, Margaret recognized the actual value of her own exhortations and knew that effective power belonged to the preachers, the tumultuous crowd, and the Confederates. She identified the province of Flanders and the cities of Antwerp, and Tournai as the most thoroughly troubled areas and used her funds to provide for "great remedy for a great evil." Where she could, she had ordered the establishment of militias, hoping that the actions of the Calvinists and reports of a resurgence of Anabaptism would encourage good subjects to take action. After all, in her opinion, the presence of Anabaptists seemed sufficient cause for everyone to return to the orthodox faith.[90] She also hoped that the meeting of the Confederates at St. Trond would cause many to separate themselves from religious factions. There a number of aristocrats chose to identify themselves as Calvinists and demanded freedom of conscience. Preachers throughout the provinces based their petitions on that act, causing more moderate aristocrats to lose enthusiasm for the movement.[91] Recognizing their feelings, Margaret argued that moderation and a pardon would then encourage the disenchanted or silent aristocracy to stand up to the Calvinists. If all joined in an Estates General, there would be at least a chance to defeat the Calvinists, although she knew good and bad would both appear. However, necessity governed and it acknowledged no firm laws. She felt compelled toward action, for inertia allowed boldness, falsehoods, and rumor to govern.[92]

Wherever magistrates tried to intervene against Calvinists, the people became unruly, and she had to report that affairs seemed close to war.[93] Margaret formulated a plan based upon the growing development of factions. She wanted Philip to furnish her with legal and financial backing to divide her opponents along lines that would separate and isolate the

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89 Ibid., 148–153 and 156–169. Letters of Margaret to William, 16–31 July 1566.

90 *Correspondance française*, 2: 296 and 303. Margaret to the bailly of Furnes and Report of the governor of the fortress at Avesnes, 20 and 23 July 1566.

91 Renon de France, *Histoire des Troubles des Pays-Bas*, C. Piot ed. 3 vols. (Brussels: 1886) 1: 119.

92 EA 282, fo. 258. Rassinghein to Margaret, 20 July 1566.

93 *Correspondance française*, 2: 280. Margaret to Philip, 31 July 1566.

ardent sectarians, whom she could then deal with by force. However, she needed to appease those who disliked the harsh and repressive nature of orders from Spain as much as they did Calvinism. In August, time began to run out for Margaret's policy. In areas such as Béthune and Ghent, where people had come forth to support the regime, her inability to furnish them with additional soldiers limited their capacity to continue and put them in danger of attacks by the Calvinists.[94]

The disintegration of the bonds of government followed her apparent appeasement of the Calvinists and Confederates. Hour by hour, degree by degree, she witnessed the extinguishing of political order. Debate over the prisoners held in places such as Tournai clearly demonstrated weakness. In Margaret's view freeing them set a pernicious example, but keeping them increased the risk of prison breaks. She finally ordered the release of Tournai's prisoners under cover of banishing them and confiscating their goods, although nothing of the sort ever happened. Nor did surrender calm public life as the Calvinists quickly organized a procession of more than a thousand armed men who entered Tournai and paraded in the marketplace. When officials demanded an explanation, the Calvinists alleged that they were responding to a request by magistrates who wanted to know if they had enough force to prevent pillaging.[95] Worried about the creation of a force in private hands, Margaret cautioned the magistrates to beware of the furor and impudence that came from such things.[96] Her orders rested on hope rather than on substance as power shifted to new people. As a result, she increasingly relied on a policy of duplicity.

The change had begun in April with the distasteful petition from the Confederates. Necessity dictated appeasement to avert violence, even though it had borne bitter fruit. The Confederates did not have overwhelming support and Margaret sought to avert continued confrontation by giving the appearance of acquiescence. Tumult in France remained a constant example of what would happen if the Confederates made common cause with the Calvinists. Margaret wanted to maintain Catholicism and knew that violence would be necessary to restore order and to end the sermons. She had to develop a plan to contain the Calvinists before the Confederates became hopelessly entangled in their cause. She decided

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[94] EA 282, fo. 291–303. Reports from Ghent and Bethune and letters of Rassenghien reporting iconoclasm along the River Lys, 1–16 Aug. 1566.

[95] EA 353, fo. 88–93. Letters of Margaret and the magistrates of Tournai, 19–26 July 1566.

[96] Ibid., fo. 93. Margaret to Tournai's magistrates, 30 July 1566.

on a limited response to Calvinism and to use only local forces in any confrontation. Part of her plan involved the use of the Confederates themselves, for in the Accord she granted them considerable prerogatives and duties in local affairs. One of these duties committed them to maintain public order, which departed from normal procedures and necessitated royal approval. Hence she urged Philip to cooperate with her and to end his long silence. To underscore her views, Margaret sent Philip proof of correspondence between sectarians in Tournai and Louis of Nassau, the very relationship she feared the most. However, she also furnished him with reports that many Confederates regarded Calvinists as being so disobedient that they had to be reprimanded. She hoped to cultivate that sentiment and to use the Confederates to accomplish the chastisement of the Calvinists. She informed Philip that the Confederates insisted on taking the lead in the matter, threatening to regard any other attack on the Calvinists as an act of war.[97]

Bringing the Confederates into play required Philip's assistance, but he never responded. Thus her regime confronted the new challenges with worn and useless practices. Surrounded by signs of impending insurrection in the southern provinces, she began to hear ominous news from the northern ones. The magistrates of Amsterdam reported field sermons that attracted great crowds.[98] Megen wrote that Confederates had sent officers into neighboring German provinces to recruit soldiers. He anticipated war and warned Margaret that it had become time to make the necessary calculations.[99] In addition, Philip's letters did nothing to dispel her apprehension about war. The king wrote to church and civil authorities to reiterate his abhorrence of heresy and those who failed to share his zeal to extirpate it. His determination and fury represented a dangerous mixture, but not an uncommon one in the menacing summer of 1566.[100]

Changes at court also troubled her, and Tomàs Armenteros claimed that she labored under great stress and with increasing signs of nervousness.[101] However, Armenteros himself withdrew and no one else outside her Italian circle remained close to Margaret. Viglius and Berlaymont, legacies

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[97] *Correspondance française*, 2: 286–287 and 289–291. Margaret to Philip, 8 and 9 Aug. 1566.

[98] Ibid., 2: 308. Amsterdam to the Council of Holland, 31 July 1566.

[99] *Briefwisseling*, 152–156. Megen to Margaret, 28 July 1566; *Correspondance française*, 2: 308. Margaret to Philip, 31 July 1566.

[100] *Correspondance française*, 2: 352–353. Philip to various authorities in the Netherlands, 1 August 1566.

[101] Dumont, *Marguerite*, 233–236.

of Granvelle's time, offered assistance, but they had come to agree with her position on moderation and offered nothing new. Morillon, still an agent of Granvelle, newly rehabilitated by Philip and dispatched to Rome, stepped up his venomous personal attacks on Margaret and all others at court who did not share his views. The Spanish agent Alonzo de Canto also forwarded reports to Philip prepared by the ardent monk Lorenzo de Villavicencio who hated what Margaret was trying to accomplish. These reports gained influence in Spain as Philip drew the Duke of Alva into his inner circle. Alva disliked the Netherlands and felt that everyone, including Margaret, betrayed both faith and king. Encouraged by Viglius, Margaret never wavered in her commitment to reason and moderation, but the forces of the time were certainly against her.[102] The Confederates made a great show of their prominence, compromising everyone else and spreading confusion through their demands and assertions. The net result was to make Margaret ever more nervous and to commit Philip to a policy of punishment for the Netherlands. Her pleas for a reasoned approach were met with silent disdain from a ruler who was convinced that she was part of a criminal conspiracy against the faith.

[102] Iongh, *Madama*, 315–316.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CALVINIST INSURRECTION

1. *A Fury of Evil*

From its first day, August 1566 proved to be a dreadful month for Margaret of Parma. Religious turmoil swept through province after province, increasing in scope to the point of rebellion. Brabant, Flanders, Hainaut, and Tournai, previously the centers of disorder, became only part of a wide pattern of Calvinist aggression. In Antwerp thousands began to attend sermons. Orange reported how the efforts of a Louvain theologian to debate one of the preachers on scripture resulted in near riot. In the heated atmosphere of Antwerp the theologian had reason to fear for his life, and Orange related other episodes of violent confrontation. Some residents seized a shipment of arms destined for a royal fortress, fearing that the weapons would be used against them at the next sermon. In addition, the increasing intensity of the voices of the impoverished caused him to remain to maintain order at the kermesse, the summer fair, scheduled for August 19.[1]

From Gelderland, Megen sent Margaret an unvarnished, and thus depressing, assessment. In his view, if the king acted in concert with the Estates General and moderated his stance, many would be pleased to serve him and control the Calvinists who had made numerous enemies. Should he act in a contrary fashion, Megen saw the only possibility of victory coming from being the first on the field of combat. Consequently Philip himself should be quick to use force, for, as Megen bluntly put it, the king enjoyed great unpopularity and it would be difficult to rally people to his cause. Margaret had to respond with greater caution. Royal policies excited no loyalty, and the "strange humors" of the day forced her to act with a calm deliberation that she did not feel.[2]

However, Philip rejected moderation and criticized Brederode and the other Confederates for no longer conducting themselves in a manner

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[1] *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d'Orange*, L.P. Gachard, ed. 6 vols. (Brussels: 1847–1866), 2: 172–185. Letters of Margaret and William, 4–14 August 1566.

[2] *Briefwisseling*, 157–161. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 2–4 Aug. 1566.

Nach wenigh Predication
Die Calvinsche Religion
Das bildnus stürmen fiengen an
Das nichs ein bildt denen bleib stan
Kap Manstrantz bildt auch die alwar
Und wass sonst dem vor handen war
Zerbrochen all in kurtzer Stunde
Gleich gar vil leuten das ist kundt
Anno Dnj M. D. LXVI 22 XX August

Fig. 4. Iconoclasts, August 1566. Frans Hogenberg. British Museum.

suitable to the crown.[3] In contrast, Margaret labored to prevent the escalation of violence. The Confederate meetings at St. Trond made her anxious and she engaged in careful negotiations with their leaders afterward. Her hopes for peace in troubled areas rested in part on using the Confederates to implement unique accords in each locality. They alone had the contacts with the Calvinists necessary for negotiations. While her effort gave the Confederates the appearance of having public authority, she hoped that in exchange they would restrain passions and avert open clashes. Margaret also urged moderates to take the initiative against the spread of vigilantism and general violence. Actually, she hoped that Calvinism would remain weak enough in some areas for faithful Catholics to plead with those attending sermons to reconsider and to discuss faith without rancor, allowing friendly admonition to displace violence.[4]

Yet for many cities Margaret harbored no such hope. Violence seemed a certainty in Béthune where a preacher reportedly urged his listeners to attack "all those who were not for them." Rumor attributed preposterous numbers

[3] *Correspondance française*, 2: 276. Courteville to Margaret, 2 Aug. 1566.
[4] Ibid., 2: 301–2. Margaret to Noircarmes and the magistrates of Mons 3 Aug. 1566.

of armed followers to the preacher and, deeply alarmed, their adversaries frantically sought weapons. Likewise, reports from the Council of Holland indicated growing danger from large field sermons as they drew closer to Amsterdam.[5] Egmont, thinking the reports of great numbers at sermons were exaggerated, went to Bruges to see for himself, and was amazed to see four thousand people at one. He had considered Bruges a safe town for Catholics but found Calvinists everywhere. When the armed escort of the preacher fired a salute in his honor, it troubled Egmont deeply and he tried to diminish the importance of the act by dismissing the guard as people of poor appearance and obvious low social status.[6]

Like the letter from Egmont, most information sent to Margaret increased her anguish and apprehension, and she wondered whether the Brussels court retained any authority. The magistrates of Antwerp released prisoners against her will; the Confederates raised troops on their own authority; and men began to imitate their dress and manner, styling themselves as Gueux, or Beggars. Margaret pleaded with Joachim Hopperus and Charles de Tisnacq in Madrid, both of who had served on the councils in the Brussels court in earlier years, to make the king act, fearing that his "taciturnity" would allow the triumph of the mean spirited among his subjects. She also hoped that Berghes and Montigny would encourage a response from Philip.[7] Later she regretted urging the aloof and angry ruler to action. Margaret also felt disappointed and betrayed by the lack of response from local forces that should have aided her. Churchmen rarely stayed to confront the Calvinists when they appeared, and many persevered in practices that had attracted the scorn of reformers in the first place. In the midst of reports of sermons near Namur, its new bishop had to deal with the petition of a priest who, as the son of a priest, wanted to inherit the benefices his father had enjoyed. The bishop reported that the priest's scandalous life had already entered the sermons of the Calvinists, and the magistrates, evidently seeking to further embarrass the church, gave the petition a favorable hearing.[8]

The bishop's information arrived in Brussels along with news that in the major cities of Holland, Brabant, and Flanders, sermons were delivered

[5] Ibid., 2: 307–308. Council of Holland to Margaret, 3 Aug. 1566.

[6] Ibid., 2: 305, 330, and 335–336. Magistrates of Béthune and Egmont to Margaret, 3–10 Aug. 1566.

[7] Ibid., 2: 340. Margaret to Tisnacq, 10 Aug. 1566.

[8] Ibid., 2: 294; ibid., 2: 293–296. Margaret to Berghes and Philip, 10 Aug. 1566; *Briefwisseling*, 162. Margaret to Megen, 10 Aug. 1566; and EA 243, fo. 126–127, 2 Aug. 1566.

directly under their walls and there was an increasing Calvinist clamor for the right to build their own temples within the cities. The archbishop of Cambrai wrote plaintively to Margaret that the greater part of the residents of Câteau-Cambrésis had turned to the doctrine of Calvin and mastered the town. He professed to be at a loss as to how to act since he thought it undignified to pay attention to them directly. Consequently he asked for soldiers and cannon to restore them to the fold.[9] The efforts of Egmont to curtail sermons in Bruges failed dismally in the face of confident preachers who disregarded all opposition. Indeed, they claimed to be models of obedience, saying that God and their consciences made them offer sermons. To Calvinists, the presence of godless calumny in the city served as their excuse for opposition. Egmont noted their immediate effect on public life as suddenly no one wanted to serve as official or soldier.[10] Antwerp's magistrates even received a detailed plan for a Calvinist temple and converts to the new religion expected construction to begin immediately. Tournai's militia, created to control Calvinists, itself became a vehicle for petitions for a temple and for control over public affairs.[11] To the regent, such petitions indicated tumult and sedition and showed how far people had strayed from the king's orders. The Calvinists regarded the petitions as a natural consequence of their popularity and as a reflection of good planning. Construction of temples before the weather turned bad would solve a problem before it became a crisis. Their followers who joined city militias swore only conditional oaths, refusing in advance to act against any sermons. They all expressed the hope that the authorities would respond to changes and provide for liberty of religious practice, simply ignoring policies and royal orders that contradicted their plans.[12]

Calvinists clearly prepared for conflict. In Antwerp they organized openly, turning to the Confederates for guidance and creating an atmosphere in which commerce stopped and merchants vanished.[13] In Tournai they paraded their force for the benefit of those magistrates who had not

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[9] *Correspondance françai*se, 2: 408–409. Archbishop of Cambrai to Margaret, 12 Aug. 1566.

[10] Ibid., 2: 336–338. Letters of Margaret, Egmont and the magistrates of Bruges, 11–13 Aug. 1566.

[11] Jacques de Wesenbeke, *Mémoires* (Brussels: 1859), 269–278; Pasquier de le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, Steen tr. and ed. (New York: 1989), 121–134; *BCRH*, 11 pt. 2: 410–411. Register of the Council of Tournai, 2 Aug. 1566.

[12] *BCRH*, 11, pt. 2: 412. Register of the Council of Tournai, 9 Aug. 1566; EA 244.1, fo. 91–96. Reports from Valenciennes and West Flanders, 13–16 Aug. 1566.

[13] G.P. Guicciardini, *Lettere di Giovan Guicciardini a Cosimo e Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1577*. M. Battistine ed. (Brussels/Rome: 1949), 268–270.

themselves converted. Without question they had become so numerous that no one dared to act against them and even safe cities began to collapse. The governor of Vilvorden captured a preacher but had to release him when a mob of two thousand gathered in protest and threatened to burn the town. In Brussels, Calvinists boldly demanded the right to hear sermons; to Margaret they had become driven by fury and malice and had lost all respect and sense of obedience. In reporting to Philip, she could only cite Artois and Frisia as provinces where she knew of no open Calvinist challenge in early August. Her hostility to the Calvinists grew immeasurably, and her descriptions of them, which had never been friendly, became abusive. Despite having strong feelings, Margaret also recognized her own limitations. Calvinist confidence illustrated how power had shifted into their hands. She vented her frustration to Rassinghien and Megen, claiming that when Calvinists bothered to negotiate, they assumed she would first grant a pardon for all previous troubles, all of which made their promises and agreements for future conduct worthless.[14] Where they wished, the followers of the new religion simply took over buildings in the suburbs, especially at Ypres, Lille, and Valenciennes, where they cleared the Béguine cloister for their use. Margaret wrote:

> In Tournai they wish at all costs to convert churches into temples for their sermons, and I have been warned that there and elsewhere they exercise their interpretation of religion and have appointed ministers, supervisors, deacons, elders and other officers, even creating among themselves magistrates and governors and holding consistories as if in a new commune or republic.

The magnitude of the problem stunned her as iconoclasts seized control of the new faith.

> The sectarians are not content only to spoil and infect, having their own way, but they must go on to corrupt and despoil others, traveling in groups of great number from place to place to spread their errors, showing that they intend to infect and contaminate all, leaving nothing exempt from the contagion of heresy, tumult and sedition . . . and still more outrageous and intolerable are the sacrileges, abominations and execrable deeds of these perverse heretics about which I have been alerted over the past few days. First, several sectarians in the vicinity of Courtrai entered a convent . . . where they flung to the ground all the images, altars, and sacrament vessels, even

[14] *Correspondance française*, 2: 338. Margaret to Egmont, 13 Aug. 1566; Ibid. 2: 341. Margaret to Rassinghien, 18 Aug. 1566; *Briefwisseling*, 173–176. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 17–19 Aug. 1566.

> casting down the bread . . . along with holy oil, the baptismal font, church ornaments, and all sacred things.[15]

Margaret heard reports of how quickly the iconoclasm spread throughout rural Flanders as vehement preachers called for the annihilation of all articles associated with Catholic worship.[16]

Egmont lost control of Ghent when he went to Brussels to give advice to Margaret as the first wave of iconoclasm spread through the area. Only a handful of people participated, but no one dared to intervene to stop the wanton, even indecent, acts against sculpture, glass, and ornaments. The iconoclasts indulged in furious devastation and the majority of the populace stood by dumbfounded.[17] The court responded with hysteria as reports from far-off places in Flanders grew more horrible in proportion to the distance, and iconoclasm took on a diabolical character. To combat a fury of evil, towns that resisted iconoclasm had to seal themselves off and mount a strong guard around all churches. From Lille, Rassinghien reported that the Calvinists left to sack the churches along the River Lys. While he controlled the city for the moment, Rassinghien candidly acknowledged facing certain defeat if he confronted the mobs attacking the villages. Without sufficient forces, he ceded the countryside to the multitude swarming around the rural parishes and monasteries, prying loose all statues and ornaments to deface and wreck them.[18]

Anger and despair grew at court when the full reports of the violence of iconoclasm came pouring into Brussels. Ashamed of what she called abominations, intolerable sacrilege, and execrable deeds, the regent had to relay information that disturbed her more than anything else since she assumed office. Armenteros reported how the court seethed with anger as Margaret raged against the preachers who had started the ruining of churches. She longed to hang the preachers involved but did not underestimate the threat that they posed. It made her miserable to hear of centuries of art and culture being swept away by arrogant men confident that

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[15] *Correspondance française*, 1: 150. Margaret to Philip, 19 Aug. 1566; C. Steen, *Chronicle of Conflict* (Utrecht: 1985), 85–91; Le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, 121–134.

[16] J. De Iongh, *Madama, Margaretha van Oostenrijk Hertogin van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 317.

[17] Marc Van Vaernewyck, *Van het beroerlijl tijden in die Nederlanden en voornamelijk in Ghent 1566–1568* (Brussels: 1946); *Correspondance française*, 1: 149–153. Margaret to Philip, 19 Aug. 1566; Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm* (Bussum: 1974).

[18] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 267–268; EA 282, fo. 303. Rassinghien to Margaret, 16 Aug. 1566; EA 244.1, fo. 81–82 and 100–110. Reports from Lille, Valenciennes, Courtrai, and Mons.

they lived at the dawn of a new age.[19] Every account that reached her was worse than the last as tightly organized groups defiled and destroyed hitherto sacred and venerated objects. Worse followed, as crowds ventured forth after sermons or even prayer meetings to ravage the rural parishes and monasteries. They entered towns first at Ypres where, as she reported, several foreigners who were allowed entry by thoroughly corrupt common citizens led everyone in attacking the churches. They spent from dawn to dusk smashing, burning, and breaking everything associated with Catholic services and practices. Their outrages and the calmness with which they announced their future objectives stunned her.

Shocked and chilled, Margaret saw that the failure of the bourgeoisie in the cities to check the destruction distanced them from the king's service. Only small numbers in each community participated directly in iconoclasm, but most others refused to respond to the attacks. Even when authorities did act, few iconoclasts suffered arrest.[20] The response of the magistrates of Béthune to the threat seemed typical. They took no position and said that if Margaret wanted to act, they would furnish neither men nor money. On the same day the court received news of the devastation of a monastery near Béthune, the last act of which involved the slaughtering of the order's flock of sheep in the church itself. The magistrates of Courtrai seemed more apologetic in making similar reports. They recognized that loyal Catholics felt violated and abandoned and asked her for better advice than she had previously given on the problem. However, they offered no remedy of their own. Rassinghien could furnish no help from Lille, where he could barely contain the increasingly "confused and disorderly" citizens.[21]

Indeed, each day brought Margaret additional news of the disintegration of both the Catholic Church and civil rule. Incidents became increasingly violent, and she recognized that the contempt each side harbored for the other threatened to degenerate into civil war. Her lieutenants either, as with Noircarmes in Valenciennes and Rassinghien in Lille, clamored for action, or, as with De Croy and Berleymont, began to suffer convenient illnesses. For six days in mid-August, authorities in Lille and Courtrai had to watch as mobs systematically marched from one rural

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[19] Iongh, *Madama*, 318–319.

[20] EA 244.1, fo. 90–94. Letters of Margaret and Noircarmes, 13 Aug. 1566.

[21] *Correspondance française*, 2: 338–341. Reports sent to Margaret, 16–19 Aug. 1566; M. Backhouse, *Beeldenstorm en Bosgeuzen in het Westkwartier (1566–1568)* (Kortrijk: 1971) 90–111.

church or monastery to another, smashing, burning, and defacing at will. The magistrates knew that Calvinists in their own cities merely awaited an opportunity to act in like fashion. Violence broke out in Lille when a Catholic mob attacked a few prisoners apprehended for iconoclasm and threatened to burn them on the spot. A Calvinist force appeared and rescued the iconoclasts. Rassinghien intervened, but could only stop the confrontation and had to watch as the former prisoners simply withdrew with their friends.[22]

Desperate to calm the situation, Margaret enlisted the Confederates directly, asking them to curb violent iconoclasm. Turning to forces outside her regime to achieve order and to regulate the conduct of the Calvinists was dangerous, but the possibility of establishing peace before the king reacted with force made the chance worth taking. Thus she announced the royal acceptance of the initial Accord and asked the Confederates to pacify all troublesome areas. That difficult and humiliating step had a quite duplicitous character, since she already knew that royal approval would never materialize.[23] The positions of both the king and the Calvinists mortified her, but she was compelled to act. Meetings of the Council of State revealed the often panicked response of the court to the violent attacks. Some members even feared traditional responses, such as the calling of an Estates General, which might only add to the confusion. All members agreed that inquisitions and the placards were things of the past and that religious freedom prevailed. The sole corrective was to allow the common law of each province to prevail and to hope that the Confederates would not escalate their demands.[24]

Without royal approval, the discussions were detached from reality. Even fortified cities such as Tournai did not have the forces necessary to control the situation. There the magistrates still hoped to blame rural iconoclasm on foreigners, the ubiquitous "strangers" who seemed to be everywhere during those dramatic days.[25] In the destruction, the Calvinists enjoyed their moment of power, for only in rare instances did the authorities attempt to halt the demolition of centuries of creative labor. The Calvinists seemed to move about at will and there was no reason to doubt that they would realize their stated objective to smash every image

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[22] EA 244.1, fo. 94–114. Documents from Flanders and Margaret's court, 13–20 Aug. 1566.
[23] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 270–272.
[24] *Notules de Berty*, in Gachard ed. *Correspondance of Guillaume le Taciture* 6: 413–422. His notes of the meeting of 22 August 1566.
[25] *BCRH*, 11, pt. 2: 413. Register of the Council of Tournai, 17 Aug. 1566.

in Flanders within twelve days. Margaret expressed surprise that they only destroyed and never stole anything, but suspected that attacks on towns would follow and would include war against the rich.

In Tournai some magistrates slowed the destruction, giving a temporary reprieve to the city's elegant churches. However, the devastation finally occurred and left nothing intact. Pasquier de la Barre reported:

> Friday 23 August people began to knock down and destroy images, first at the Hospital of St. Jacques, then at the Cordeliers monastery and at the Cross of St. Piat, and finally in every church in Tournai, including the cathedral of Nôtre Dame. There they indulged in incredible ravaging, disregarding utterly the excellence of the painting, organs, rich altars, or anything else whatsoever.... Every church, cloister, chapel and abbey both within and around the city suffered the same wreckage, as all ornaments, reliquaries, chalices, vestments, crosses, candelabra, lamps and other items used in services were torn to pieces. Nothing that came into their hands was left intact.[26]

Margaret received a note from the magistrates detailing the demands of the Calvinist leadership concerning the disposition of the precious metals, the residue of the ruin they inflicted on the cathedral. The Calvinists seemed determined to use the material for poor relief. The high tension in the meeting clearly revealed the strain that the Calvinist assault caused in the city. Catholics, stunned into momentary silence, hated every move of the Calvinists but remained leaderless because their bishop and most priests fled after issuing loud complaints about the loss of treasure and money.[27]

To the north in Gelderland, Megen averted violence with promises that no inquisition would enter the province. Confident, he offered his services and those of his soldiers to Margaret, who promptly ordered them to Brussels. However, his optimism about having achieved religious peace lacked true foundation, as did in fact his promises to the magistrates. He remained equally unaware of the vast popularity of Calvinism and of the king's refusal to compromise. Megen had assumed there would be positive royal action because Margaret inferred this in her letters. He passed that on to local authorities, encouraging them thereby to ignore the Confederates, whom Megen regarded as isolated and thus a mere faction. When he realized that the regent herself negotiated with the Confederates and

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[26] Le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, 131.

[27] Ibid., 413–414. Register of the Council of Tournai, 23–24 Aug. 1566; Pasquier de le Barre, *Mémoires de Pasquier de le Barre et de Nicholas Soldoyer*, A. Pinchart ed. (Brussels: 1859–865) 2: 367–368. Letter of the Bishop of Tournai, 24 Aug. 1566.

that the king had not cooperated, Megen fell conveniently ill and refused to attend her in Brussels. Ignoring Megen's fury over her deception, Margaret begged for his support to check the spread of iconoclasm toward Brussels, and she tried to urge him on with pitiful reports of savage attacks on sacred objects in Flanders. Even secular works of art, including a statue of her father, fell to the iconoclasts. Margaret added sarcastically that the destruction represented the first fruit of the saintliness that preachers had spoken about so much in recent months.[28]

By the time her lament reached Megen on 22 August 1566 iconoclasm had swept into Gelderland. A preacher presented sermons in Venlo and Roermond without opposition and announced that the Confederates protected him. With typical bluntness, Megen noted the blend of "evil inclinations" among the Calvinists and fearful inaction by others, with the result that the wolves devoured all good things. He saw how quickly factions spread and recognized how much the Calvinists differed from everyone else. Megen expressed amazement that any of his fellow aristocrats would have anything to do with them. The Confederates acted in a charged religious environment without themselves having any convictions.[29] They displayed traditional aristocratic habits of opposition while finding support from an untraditional group. The Calvinists became ever bolder, denouncing their opponents as papists and demanding a reversal of the order of persecution, trying to threaten Catholic clerics with legal penalties. Those at court regarded it all as a diabolical plot.[30]

2. *A New Accord*

However, the Confederates presented an opportunity to control some aspects of Calvinist behavior. Negotiations resulted in a new Accord promising more moderation in exchange for efforts by the Confederates to pacify areas where troubles had broken out, allowing sermons in places where they had already occurred, but halting other Calvinist activity.[31] Like all of Margaret's plans, these accords required Philip's collaboration. She thus offered the Confederates assurances that had no substance, but her only other possible course was inaction. From afar, Megen feared that

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[28] *Briefwisseling*, 177–178. Margaret to Megen, 20 Aug. 1566.
[29] Ibid., 179–180. Megen to Margaret, 21–23 Aug. 1566.
[30] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 272–273.
[31] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 311–321; *Briefwisseling*, 180–181. Margaret to Megen, 24 Aug. 1566.

the Confederates would suddenly become the strongest party, causing all agreements to falter. Only when the magistrates of Nijmegen actually escorted a preacher into the city, assisted at his sermon, and allowed him to establish a residence, did Megen realize how difficult the situation had become. Margaret heard similar grave news from Malines, where iconoclasm began with an assault on the Cordeliers monastery. In response, the magistrates armed and guarded the marketplace. The two sides faced one another without violence, but the Calvinist force grew during the day, while that of the magistrates dwindled. The magistrates admitted that the bourgeoisie of the city had become divided and incapable of action, and expressed relief when Margaret dispatched Antoine de Lalaing, Count of Hoogstraten, to restore order. He had sufficient authority to prevent further destruction in the countryside. His efforts represented the first fruit of the new Accord with the Confederates, and Margaret anxiously watched to see if he could confine sermons to the fields. Most important, she wanted to know if he could stop Calvinist iconoclasm altogether.[32]

Hoogstraten had enthusiasm for the Accord, but others questioned its virtues. Margaret begged Megen to understand that circumstances compelled her to negotiate the Accord and that her regret and heartbreak had to be balanced with the need to prevent the destruction of all the churches in the Netherlands. She also had to allow people in Brussels to attend sermons at Vilvoorde, for they simply ignored the pleas of her emissary, Mansfeld, to do otherwise. Egmont, Margaret continued, had fared even worse at Ypres, where he made the Calvinists swear not to indulge in iconoclasm before he would allow a sermon. They agreed, but reneged on their promise the minute the sermon ended. Rumors in Brussels reported that Calvinists wanted to deliver sermons in the marketplace and then kill churchmen and royal officials at the court. Her instincts told her to flee, but the magistrates forced her to stay.[33] None of her loyal captains had any regard for Calvinist promises, and Megen's anger and scorn grew with each incident. The citizens of Arnhem rioted on his approach, fearing that he would garrison the town, and their Calvinist leaders tried to extort a promise that he would not do so if they would refrain from attacking churches. Suspecting their trustworthiness, he refused. Disorder thus ruled the provinces. The principal council in Holland saw sedition on every side and warned that

[32] *Correspondance française*, 2: 342–343. Reports from the magistrates of Malines and Hoogstraten, 23 and 26 Aug. 1566.

[33] *Briefwisseling*, 181–184. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 25–26 Aug. 1566.

Amsterdam appeared at risk. In Utrecht, magistrates accepted a separate accord with the Calvinists that left the new religion dominant.[34]

Iconoclasts also ruined the churches of Câteau-Cambrésis and its magistrates had to allow the Calvinist preacher to appoint himself administrator of all religious affairs. The preacher's first order required that all Catholic churchmen attend his next sermon. Hoogstraten reported that the Calvinists of Malines interpreted rumors of a royal pardon for previous events as an indication of royal approval of iconoclasm. He chose not to refute them, for they might declare the Accord to be a mere ruse to keep them from being prepared for an attack. Everything, he reported, had become open to interpretation, so he chose to release prisoners taken during the bouts of iconoclasm in Malines. He thought that they suffered more from famine than from religious conviction in any event. Authorities sent similar dismal tidings from every quarter. Rancor, diversity of opinion, and uncertainty among magistrates had accompanied the outburst.[35]

Margaret's responses came to be rooted uniquely in expediency. To authorities in areas where she had no expectation of regaining immediate control, she expressed amazement that such events had occurred, but refrained from threats. To faithful captains such as Megen, Moulbais, and Noircarmes, she sent funds and orders to prepare for action. She recognized the drastic changes signaled by iconoclasm, but regarded the Calvinist triumph as incomplete and hoped for opportunities to redress the situation.[36] Yet she had to have the cooperation of the king in the process since her policy called for both force and compromise. While he sent some money for soldiers, he did not retreat from his decision to punish his errant subjects. In Madrid, the unlucky Montigny and Berghes had explained matters according to Margaret's plan, but the king had come to regard the two as odious participants in the events that had taken place in the Netherlands. They wrote to Margaret at the end of August about their mission's end and felt vaguely troubled by being unable to obtain a firm date for their return. Philip had already decided their only destina-

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[34] P. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 1554–1569* (Cambridge: 1978), 140–150; P.C. Hooft, *Nederlandse Historien in het Kort* (Antwerp: 1978), 44–47; R.B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam.* (Amsterdam: 1965), 54–61.

[35] *Correspondance française*, 2: 344–345 and 395–410. Hoogstraten and the Council of Holland to Margaret, 27–28 Aug. 1566; *Briefwisseling*, 186–188. Megen to Margaret, 30 Aug. 1566; EA 230, fo. 192. Magistrates of Utrecht to Margaret, 26 Aug. 1566.

[36] *Correspondance française*, 2: 343, 391 and 391–398. Margaret to Hoogstraten, Noircarmes and magistrates of Amsterdam, 27–30 Aug. 1566; *Briefwisseling*, 188. Megen to Margaret, 30 Aug. 1566.

tion would be the scaffold, but they knew nothing of that yet. In a cynical move, Philip even asked them to brief Alva, whom he had decided to dispatch to the provinces at the head of an army. After that, Montigny and Berghes remained in limbo at court for several months and then disappeared into Philip's prisons. Neither Margaret nor her secretaries at Madrid had the least idea of Philip's vengeful plan and they continued to prepare for a pacification of the Netherlands rather than for an attack.[37]

However, the old problems of authority and finance continued to nag her, and she envied the ease with which the Calvinists raised money; she remained destitute as their coffers grew. Since the Calvinists had successfully challenged the forces she had in the field, she wrote that if the king failed to send additional revenue, hateful events would continue to occur. To reinforce her request, Margaret sent Philip a rough account of the expenditure of the 300,000 *florins* he had sent. Only 40,000 *florins* went directly for normal expenses, including costs borne by the court and by Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn in their governmental tasks. One-third of the total Philip sent went to fund pensions he had promised to German princes. Almost all the rest paid for military salaries, fortifications, munitions, and the ill-fated journey of Berghes and Montigny to Madrid. In her accounting, normal recurrent expenses mingled freely with extraordinary military costs. The cessation of commercial activity caused tax revenue to stop, and local authorities refused to consider imposing additional *aides*. Thus Margaret had to use the subsidy to pay for existing troops.[38] She begged the king to aid her in both military and political maneuvers. Otherwise she felt condemned to wait and watch as the Calvinists, full of fury and utterly out of control, ran riot and burned the churches they did not have the time to deface, destroying all order in the process.[39]

The reports from city and country alike revealed the complete paralysis of government. Many individuals remained loyal, but institutions failed. In Ypres, the magistrates reported the ruining of churches and the menacing of churchmen and admitted doing nothing for fear that if they called out the militia, its members might side with the Calvinists. As government

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[37] *Correspondance française*, 2: 363. Berghes and Montigny to Margaret, 31 Aug. 1566; P.C. Hooft, *Nederlandse historien*, 34–35.

[38] *Correspondance française*, 2: 354 and 410. Rough financial records from Margaret's court, Aug. 1566. The regent listed the following payments out of the 300,000 florins the king sent her: repairs to a fort, 10,000; two months pay for garrisons, 40,000; German pensions, 100,000; court costs, 100,000; several necessities, 40,000; and interest on loans, 10,000. She thus overspent 10,000 florins.

[39] Ibid., 1: 149–153. Margaret to Philip, 19 Aug. 1566.

stopped, so also did Catholic worship. The magistrates of Courtrai felt more resolute and asked Margaret to clarify what the Accord permitted the Calvinists, although they lacked the force to impose limits. They also told of the efforts of rural residents to take down and hide the most revered statues and objects, despite their fear of retribution from Calvinist mobs. Rassenghien abandoned the countryside to save Lille and noted that local lords who did not join the Calvinist cause often faced threats. At Aire, the Lord of Morbecque wrote to Margaret that a preacher actually came to his door to demand entrance so that he could destroy the small chapel in his chateau. That disturbed him, but he felt that he could rely on most of the common people for support. Margaret, seizing opportunity wherever it presented itself, managed to move a dozen soldiers to help him control that part of Flanders. She also thanked the local lord at Lens, who had written to offer his services despite his open dislike of Philip's policies. He had served Charles V but withdrew because of Philip. Only the Calvinist assault caused him to change.[40]

The comfort Margaret received from such support did not offset her growing fear that the major cities would be lost. Iconoclasm before August 23 had affected rural areas or small towns, but she feared the effect of the attacks on cities. Serious divisions after the attacks threatened Tournai, Antwerp, Lille, Ghent, and Bruges. The grim news absorbed the discussions of the councils in Brussels and the regent had to plead with the Confederates for help. She reaffirmed placards against iconoclasts, trying to make it clear that no one had granted the Calvinists the right to undertake any such action. They frequently claimed to act with her authority as well as with that of the Confederates, and even in the midst of the insurrection, she denounced them as liars and sedition mongers. She also went out of her way to praise each act of resistance, as when the peasants near Douai saved their church and even captured some iconoclasts.

Whenever possible, Margaret acted. After identifying Tournai and Valenciennes as the centers of the trouble, she tried to move more provisions and men into Tournai's citadel and to reinforce the Lord of Noircarmes, who commanded a loyal detachment at Valenciennes. She clearly hoped that the future would give her an opportunity to strike at the very centers of the scandal and "public robbery" that had descended on the area, even

[40] EA 282, fo. 305–348. Letters of Rassenghien, Margaret and authorities in Flanders and Artois, 17–31 Aug. 1566.

though she knew that taking action might encourage civil war.[41] Margaret never abandoned hopes to undo Calvinist success even as Antwerp, Tournai, and Valenciennes reported a new wave of destruction so thorough that nothing remained of either the old church or the government. In the areas where churches already were cluttered with shattered statues, the Calvinists chased away any churchmen and compelled all residents to listen to sermons. The only way to avert further iconoclasm, she told Philip, was to call an Estates General, issue a declaration of freedom of conscience, and approve all Calvinist assemblies and sermons. While she did not think that he would approve of any of the proposals, she pointed out that none of his earlier responses had offered much satisfaction. She ended her report with a postscript telling of grim news from all of Brabant and detailing additional concessions she made to the Confederates in an effort to calm the situation.[42]

However, the Confederates offered no hope for quick pacification. While many of them commanded great respect, the Calvinist preachers held the dominant position in the new religion. They did not represent a unified group and divided, often with angry words, over iconoclasm. Complete confessional unity eluded them despite common training and interests. Some who followed the preachers into the ravaging of churches were hardly fellow travelers in theology. Megen reported that those arrested in the ruins of a church at Malines suffered from hunger, not religious enthusiasm, although they may have represented only those slow to flee from his men.[43] From Brussels, the enemy seemed to be everywhere, but lacked certain identity except for having "malicious and mean designs."[44]

By the end of August, all hope of arresting the spread of violence had disappeared, casting Margaret into the deepest gloom. What had happened to the Catholic Church shocked her, for iconoclasm had left whole areas without priests, ornaments, books, or any sign of services.

> They have chased away the priests, and in some places they have begun to penalize those who do not wish to attend sermons, compelling the good

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[41] EA 244.5, piece 6 and EA 353, fo. 97–102. Letters of Margaret and Moulbais, 24 and 27 Aug. 1566.

[42] *Correspondance française*, 2: 325–326. Margaret to Philip, 22 Aug. 1566.

[43] P. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching*, 150–181; Le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, 139; *Briefwisseling*, 188–189. Megen to Margaret, 30 Aug. 1566; J. de Potter, *Dagboek van Cornelis en Philips van Campen* (Ghent: 1861), 10.

[44] Paillard, *Valenciennes*, vol. 5; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 342 and 369. Letters of Rassenghien and of Margaret, 25–28 Aug. 1566; *BCRH*, 11, pt. 2: 415. Register of the Council of Tournai, 26 Aug. 1566.

> to convert. They have begun to go to churches to say their prayers as if in a temple, and they might shortly hear sermons, saying that they have had enough preaching in the fields.

Calvinists converted the cathedral in Antwerp, whitewashing the interior after smashing everything in it. While those deeds shocked her, Margaret felt that the violence would grow and continued to fear a massacre of churchmen and royal officials and she expressed confusion about what course to follow. There were personal attacks on her in posters and slogans in Brussels, and she appeared pale and forlorn at court. The thought of fleeing to Mons, where she had stationed soldiers as a last bastion against sedition, was an attractive option. However, the Council of State and a delegation from the magistrates of Brussels dissuaded her, claiming that the act would occasion general despair. Margaret felt certain that the magistrates had closed the city gates and made her a prisoner in her own court.[45]

The king never considered her plight. He waited so long to comment on the troubles that subsequent events rendered his decisions and policies inadequate and impractical, and the discussion of events became purely local. In the provinces, aristocrats continued to demand an Estates General, but Orange and Egmont cautioned her that the number of Calvinists had become so great that freedom of conscience would inevitably become a topic if one met. Nor would the Calvinists agree to any accord that did not provide them with freedom of religious exercise. Orange wrote to her from Antwerp that he had come to terms with the Calvinists there and that the only alternative to accepting his plan involved calling an Estates General.[46] Margaret was trapped. She issued edicts, but they were ignored in many places and unenforceable in all. The effects of the violence chagrined her, and her efforts to achieve peace verged on surrender because the Confederates stood between her and the use of new levies of troops. They adamantly claimed the right to control all new units, or else they would withdraw their support of her policy. To gain their cooperation, she had to allow the Confederates to tell the Calvinists that as long as they conducted themselves peacefully and held sermons only where they had in the past, her government would not interfere. The members of the Order told her that the physical ruin of churches and towns along with the possibility of a civil war remained the alternative. Days of despair passed,

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[45] *Correspondance française*, 2: 326–332. Margaret to Philip, 29 August 1566.
[46] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 202. William to Margaret, 29 Aug. 1566.

during which the stress caused her ill health, before she finally resolved to agree. Unable to dissimulate, she had to give in, for as she debated the issue the news grew worse, with missives from all the provinces recounting the profanation and destruction of another church or monastery. To her, it looked as if the church would be utterly swept from the land.[47] The only direct offers of help came from individual Confederates, but she regarded them with fear and repugnance. When the troubles struck Brussels, she again tried to flee to Mons, but could not. The new Accord with the Confederates saved the churches in the area of Brussels, but all services had to be canceled and she noted the popularity of sermons among the members of the city's bourgeoisie. She also hinted to Philip that some of the highest aristocracy had defected to the new religion.[48]

In every respect the situation was dismal and unhappy, but Margaret never lost sight of her original perception of the problem. The people had become corrupt through seductive sermons and the incapacity of the government to be forceful. In her view, Philip had to come to the Netherlands, but not to remedy the situation by arms alone. The moment the people thought that he would use force, all would be lost. She wanted to rebuild on the basis of the good subjects who remained rather than allowing the land to dissolve into civil war.[49] However, her position became hopeless. With each letter to Philip, Margaret tried to encourage moderation even though she had to include information that must have rendered him livid with anger. She reported that Orange helped her, but also said that the people who demanded sermons in Brussels operated from his palace. Likewise, the Confederates offered assistance, but they had helped to demolish the government they suddenly wished to serve.

At every turn she met with the insolence of the Calvinists, all of which she dutifully reported without ever coming to advocate their wholesale destruction. She continued to try to compromise, working to restore order with whatever forces she could muster, even if that meant including the Confederates in her pacification plan. The pain of having to attempt to govern with borrowed authority anguished her, and the assault on the religion that she cherished incensed her. However she foresaw ruin if she did not further appease the Calvinists, or if Philip became determined to restore obedience through force. In a secret letter, Margaret emphasized

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[47] Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 300–321; Le Barre, *Mémoires* 1: 140–150.

[48] *Correspondance française*, 2: 331. Margaret to Philip, 29 Aug. 1566; Ines d'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio Intimo di Margherita d'Austria, Duchessa di Parma e Piacenza* (Naples, 1919), 153.

[49] Ibid., 2: 332–334. A secret letter from Margaret to Philip, 29 Aug. 1566.

the precarious nature of the situation, since ardor by either king or Calvinist could ruin the land and panic the rich to the point of flight. She wanted him to come, but only after he paid for troops to contain some of the problems spawned by purely rebellious elements. Confident that justice could prevail, Margaret was eager to act. She knew that some matters had to be debated, but only after limited force had restored public tranquillity.[50]

Philip shared none of Margaret's views. Agonizingly slow in discussing the crisis, he could only affirm some of the things she had already done, deny or ignore others, and reiterate his determination never to have an Estates General. He did send money for her to raise forces, but he did not discuss the issues her letters had raised. In fact, none of the letters sent to Margaret discussed policy except in cases where she had to act. Thus, Philip wanted to raise troops in the empire and ordered her to pay the pensions of some of the German princes so that they would be amenable. He did not discuss his decision to use force in the letter; however its tone expressed wholly negative attitudes and he denounced permissive acts, including the Accord with the Confederates. The petitions of Tournai and Antwerp to have sites for temples infuriated and jarred him more than anything else.[51] In short, terse letters, Philip showed his hostility to all the Calvinist demands and condemned the Confederates and others in authority who had allowed even the modest insurrection that he knew of at that time. In his own court he informed Montigny and Berghes of his decision to raise troops and brushed aside their protests that he allowed no place for the lords of the Netherlands. Montigny became vehement in his denunciation of a policy which he claimed would destroy the provinces, but only managed to disrupt the court, leaving the king's thinking unchanged.[52]

The royal missives altered nothing for Margaret. Her court continued to be a prisoner of a volatile city, and the news from the provinces worsened. The bishop of Tournai, writing from Lille, related the destruction of his diocese's churches in pitiful terms, and he had to complain that his exile became interrupted by identical events in that city.[53] Orange returned to Antwerp on 27 August, by which time the ruin and rubble of statues, ornaments, and paintings filled the churches. He and the magistrates ended

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[50] Ibid., 2: 334; *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 204. Margaret to William, 31 Aug. 1566.
[51] *Correspondance française*, 2: 345–347. Segovia Woods Letters, 22 Aug. 1566.
[52] Ibid., 2: 357–362. Philip to Margaret, 27–30 Aug. 1566.
[53] EA 244.5, piece 6. Bishop of Tournai to Margaret, 28 Aug. 1566.

attacks on churches with the summary execution of three iconoclasts who had also engaged in looting. Orange also had to deal with reports of iconoclasm from Utrecht and Holland, where some of the magistrates, made bold by his absence and urged on by the Confederates, hastened to make accords with the Calvinists. Although he seconded Margaret's criticism of such accords, Orange quickly reached one of his own in Antwerp. He allowed Calvinist sermons but insisted on the restoration of the Catholic Church and treated preachers and priests the same in terms of civic and religious responsibilities. Orange contended that almost twenty thousand people left the city for each sermon, disrupting commercial life and leaving themselves and Antwerp open to attack by vagabonds who could return in their midst.[54]

3. *Calculated Concessions*

A flood of similar reports confirmed general distress and forced the publication of yet another agreement with the Confederates, who assumed the task of restoring order and disarming the people. Since they enjoyed high regard among those of the new religion, she gave them the governance of all areas where iconoclasm stood as the symbol of Calvinist success. She asked them to restore matters to the status that existed in the middle of August, offering the prospect of an Estates General once they completed pacification and brought the perpetrators of the attacks against churches to justice.[55] In that cynical document, Margaret gave the nobles precisely what they had demanded, fundamental control of the direction of government, even though the king had already rejected her policy. Within hours of the publication of the agreement, lesser members of the Confederates appeared before baffled magistrates who seemed uncertain whether they represented Margaret or the Calvinist cause. In Tournai three aristocrats appeared who claimed to represent Count Hoorn but who wanted to exercise power as if commissioned by the regent. They immediately established a separate center of authority with the blessing of the Calvinist leadership. The magistrates, dismayed by all the events of August,

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[54] *Correspondance . . . Orange* 2: 196–229. Letters of Margaret and William, 27 Aug.–9 Sept. 1566; A.T. Van Deursen, *Willem van Oranje: een biografish portret* (Amsterdam: 1995), 37–42.

[55] *Copie des lettres patentes en forme d'assurance que la Duchesse de Parme, Regent etc. a donne aux Gentilzhommes confederez . . .* (Brussels, August, 1566).

watched, glum and passive. They awakened only when Margaret moved troops into Tournai's citadel, something quite unexpected since they considered her incapable of action. The magistrates saw the possibility of suffering attack from either the citadel or from the Calvinists, who blamed them for allowing the entry to occur. In a gamble, Margaret moved loyal troops into all the fortifications still under her control. She felt her way along a very uncertain path, fearing that too great a concentration of force in any one area would occasion a massacre of Catholics but that too small a force would trigger an attack on the soldiers themselves.[56]

The contest of wills in Tournai, Valenciennes, and the rural areas of West Flanders provided a test. All parties participated in a search for a new order after the Calvinist insurrection had reduced traditional relationships to a shambles. The Confederates Villers and d'Esquerades in Tournai and similar figures in most major cities, claimed to represent the regent but could furnish no formal powers. Their attempt to associate themselves with her revealed a weakness of resolve and organization within the ranks of the Confederates. The magistrates disliked the matter heartily; while the insurrection had seriously limited their power, they showed reluctance to transfer authority to minor aristocrats. Tradition dictated granting a member of the Golden Fleece the power to lead the city away from disaster. Margaret never disavowed the representatives of the Confederates, but she never seconded their efforts. Since she had dispatched Montigny to Spain, she needed to appoint a person of equal stature to replace him during the crisis. She chose Count Hoorn, Montigny's brother, and prepared a carefully worded instruction that did not transfer all initiative to him. Margaret ordered him to pacify the city, using coercion if necessary, although she never clarified his precise powers and thus retained ample room to repudiate any of his subsequent moves. Most important of all, the regent denied him control of the citadel and retained a separate line of communication with its commander.[57]

Margaret had less flexibility in areas without citadels. In Valenciennes, the small garrison had to withdraw and public business came under the direction of the Confederates and Calvinists, making it seem that she

[56] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 370–375. Letters of Margaret, the magistrates of Tournai, the commander in the citadel and of Hoorn, 28–31 Aug. 1566; *BCRH* 11, pt. 2: 415–419. Registers of the meetings of the Council of Tournai and recommendations of Hoorn, 31 Aug. 1566; EA 353, fo. 103 and 107. 31 Aug. 1566.

[57] EA 244.5, pieces 7–15. Correspondence of Margaret, Hoorn, and the commander of the citadel, 30 Aug.–17 Sept. 1566.

had surrendered. However, by putting conditions on the Accord with the Confederates and insisting that their tasks had to be essentially restorative, she ensured the failure of their mission while buying time for her own government. Her dissimulation appeared more clearly in letters she sent to all provincial and city authorities announcing the new Accord. In them, Margaret insisted that disorders cease and that the Catholic religion and royal authority suffer no impairment as a precondition to further negotiations.[58] Such conditions seemed out of keeping with the reality of her situation, but they provided a standard against which to measure the actions of local officials after 25 August. Praying for better times, Margaret began to send out two different sets of orders. One went to places utterly out of her control and reeked of appeasement. The other went to commanders of loyal garrisons, such as Moulbais in Tournai and Noircarmes near Lille. Those letters left no doubt that she had begun the planning for her counterattack.[59]

As regent she also began to charge officials with specific tasks in containing the insurrection. Megen had warned that meetings of local associations of aristocrats made claims to power. In response, she corresponded directly with officers commanding bands of troops telling them to take orders from no one but herself. Moreover, she demanded that the magistrates of Ghent hold trials for prisoners who had been taken in the act of smashing the churches. She made quite an issue out of rejecting their request to set the people free, saying that some clear steps had to be taken against such execrable acts. Likewise she demanded that the Council of Flanders immediately arrest two parish priests in rural districts who had suddenly started preaching in the Calvinist mode. Margaret told them to ignore episcopal jurisdictions and to proceed directly, underscoring how greatly the recent troubles changed affairs. Her activity did encourage some. In Arras, Megen, recently moved there from Gelderland, continued to relish direct action. When Calvinists from Tournai arrived to help convert Arras, he arrested them and delighted in the hatred his act attracted from the followers of the new religion.[60] Such action assured Margaret some control over operations and gave her pacification plan

[58] *Copie des lettres close aux consaulx et villes*, 28 Aug. 1566.

[59] C. Paillard, *Huit mois dans la vie d'un peuple. Les Pays-Bas du premier janvier au premier septembre 1566, d'après les mémoires et les correspondances du temps* (Brussels: 1877); Le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, 139–172.

[60] EA 282 fo. 350–375. Documents and correspondence relating to Ghent, Arras and Flanders, Sept. 1566.

credibility, except, unfortunately, in Madrid. The king did not see that she gave ground only to avoid greater evil.[61]

Consequently, the gulf between the king and his regent widened. Margaret had to be circumspect. Had she directly carried out royal commands, she would have been associated with the levying of German troops rather than with the efforts to employ the services of the Confederates in pacification. Such an association would, she felt sure, drive the land closer to civil war. Thus she temporized, even dissimulated, in dealing with Philip's orders, just as she did with the demands of the members of the Golden Fleece. The sheer audacity of the Calvinists continued to astonish her. A preacher at Enghien appeared before the magistrates to congratulate the regent on having come to her senses by allowing people to hear the true word of God. Exuding confidence, he continued with a request for the use of a church and for the silencing of critics of the new religion. The offended magistrates were also unnerved by the large number of merchants who escorted the preacher.[62]

Nevertheless, Margaret continued to marshal support and ordered operations against some cities. Even with loyal captains chosen as much for their faith as for their skill, Margaret faced a formidable task. Her commanders lacked the prestige to control cities whose residents had armed and stood on a war footing. Most of her efforts to achieve pacification had been as fruitless as those trying to reestablish the Catholic religion in the places where indifferent magistrates allowed free exercise of both religions, but always to the detriment of the old faith. Her only hope remained with the leaders of the Golden Fleece, but they were uncertain allies. Orange had gone to Antwerp to bring order in her name, but ended up signing an accord with the Calvinists that granted them freedom to exercise their religion and to present sermons in the city. When she rebuked him, Orange claimed changed circumstances forced the pact upon him because the Calvinists had converted more than half the people of Antwerp. Margaret could only take comfort in reports of divisions among the Protestants, whose numerous factions ruined efforts to unify them in Antwerp.[63]

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[61] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 273–275.

[62] *Correspondance française*, 2: 407–408. Request to the magistrates of Enghien, 5 Sept. 1566.

[63] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 213–218. William to Margaret and a copy of the accord, 2 Sept. 1566; Wesenbeke, *Mémoires*, 320–321; Hooft, *Nederlandse historien*, 37.

The activities of Hoogstraten in Malines also caused difficulties arising from confusion over the Accords. Local authorities demanded convocation of estates, the issuing of a pardon for iconoclasts, and a generous interpretation of the Accord with regard to additional venues for sermons. While few of the magistrates had adopted Calvinism, the rest dared not offer opposition. Hoogstraten himself gave way before "evil humors" in Malines, issuing his own pardon and granting the town all the privileges in religion given to Antwerp. He also released prisoners and denied the request of the council to have a Carmelite monk preach a Catholic sermon, fearing the man would suffer assassination. Such actions defied everything Margaret wanted Hoogstraten to do, but to rebuke him from nearby Brussels where she remained equally powerless seemed absurd.[64]

Count Hoorn's efforts to pacify the Tournaisis also caused her anxiety. She feared he would forge a separate accord with the Calvinists. Her obvious suspicion had complicated Hoorn's mission and deeply troubled the Calvinists, who thought that the insurrection had given them public authority in Tournai. Actual Calvinist power remained unclear, but they were bold in their demands and confident in negotiations with Hoorn. Margaret decided to take a chance and assume that they had triumphed through intimidation rather than conversion of the people and she chose to stand up to them in Tournai. The test came in her backing of Moulbais and the Lord of Beauvoir, loyal officers in the citadel. She encouraged them to ignore the Calvinists and to evade demands placed on them by Hoorn. Consequently, whenever Hoorn seemed ready to accommodate the demands of the Calvinists, Beauvoir resisted. Beauvoir wanted to disarm the Calvinists, whereas Hoorn wanted to bring them into a reorganized militia, thereby giving them responsibility and a measure of control. They also divided on allowing sermons in the city and on the return of the objects of value seized during the iconoclasm. Hoorn consistently favored the Calvinists, regarding them as the triumphant party and thus worthy of favor. He wanted to accept their power as reality and to modify public authority accordingly. The change included removing the citadel as a threat and having the bishop return so the two religions could meet on equal terms and rearrange Tournai's spiritual life. He added the acceptance of sermons in the city to these points and made them the core of his pacification program, thereby far exceeding his orders. He warned that if

[64] *Correspondance française*, 2: 400–404. Letters of Hoogstraten and Margaret, 2–7 Sept. 1566.

the regent did not like to hear his words, she should remove him. Hoorn wanted to be absolutely open about the consequences of isolating Calvinist worship outside the city and of failing to reorganize the militia.

Margaret did not dispute him, but refused to make further concessions. She had the citadel to give force to her refusal, but also wished to test the mettle of both the Calvinists and the remaining Catholics. One missive from Margaret remained firm in telling Hoorn not to exceed the bounds established in the Accord with the Confederates and to pay more attention to his own reputation when dealing with Calvinists.[65] In the letters of 5–7 Sept. 1566, Hoorn expressed all the outrage proper for a member of the Order rebuked by a mere regent and governess. He reminded her of the ambiguous nature of the Accord and that he, not she, had to face the dangerous confusion that followed the iconoclast outburst. Hoorn's vast ego confronted an equally large problem, but he claimed that his intelligence allowed him to see all of issues clearly. In the divided and volatile time, he believed the reports of tens of thousands of armed men gathering to support the Calvinists and thought that civil war would follow if appeasement failed. He viewed his own position with candor, saying "I would wish for my part to be besieged by the Turk in some place where I could serve Christendom than to be employed in these present affairs, knowing that some fault will be imputed to me even though I do all that is humanly possible. For there is much difference between being in a place and only hearing speak of it."[66]

Hoorn had absolutely no intention of imposing order through force. As a realist, he wanted to allow sermons in Tournai to avert riots during bad weather. Hoorn thus gave verbal agreement for the conversion of areas in the market district for Calvinist ceremonies and construction of a temple. Before doing so, he met secretly with Egmont, whom Margaret had dispatched to pacify Flanders. Both men felt uneasy and troubled by the multitude of problems encountered in pacifying people in a time of change, and they distrusted both Philip and Margaret. Their secrecy made the regent testy and infuriated the king, especially since both Egmont and Hoorn made concessions to the Calvinists immediately after their meeting.

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[65] EA 244.4, pieces 11–13. Letters of Hoorn to Margaret, 11–13 Sept. 1566; *BCRH* 11, pt. 2: 420–421. Register of the councils of Tournai, 4–5 Sept. 1566.

[66] EA 244.5, pieces 13 and 14. Letters of Margaret and Hoorn, 8–12 Sept. 1566; EA 353 fo. 108–110. Letters of Margaret and Beauvoir, 12–14 Sept. 1566.

Margaret had to remain cordial with the two, but cautioned them about royal anger.[67]

Nor did scheming alleviate the essential problems. In Flanders, Valenciennes converted three Catholic churches for Calvinist services. The Calvinist leaders chased away all officials who tried to impede them, including the provost and commissioners dispatched to oversee religious affairs. The Calvinists informed the commissioners that their heads would be used in the bowling game of *pelotte* if they remained in Valenciennes. In Ypres and Audenarde the Calvinists also struck bargains with leading aristocrats or their representatives that went far beyond the powers the regent had granted to them. Ghent kept sermons out, but in revenge Calvinists prevented any Catholic services from being held.[68] Even in areas Margaret regarded as safe, magistrates reported a high state of anxiety. Wherever possible, magistrates ignored orders from Brussels and watched the efforts of the Golden Fleece as they negotiated pacification agreements. In the uncertain times of 1566, the leading members of the Order gave the appearance of being able to achieve stability. Thus their negotiations, even though wholly dependent on the situations of individual cities, replaced discussions in Brussels as a center for public affairs. No city wanted to accept less than what another had gained by that route and as a consequence each refused to deal directly with Margaret. While their recalcitrance disheartened her, it never eroded her resolve to deal with the issues herself.

Megen, Beauvoir, Rassenghien, and Noircarmes provided Margaret with a measure of dependable force. However, their efforts to check Calvinist activity held considerable danger since they had only meager forces. Wherever Catholics opposed the new religion, they attempted to help, but resistance came at a considerable cost. Ten people protected the Abbey of Marciennes from iconoclasts and the attackers killed one and injured another. Other Calvinists in Flanders petitioned to deal directly with the regent to forge a general accord to end the conspiracies they saw all around them. The Calvinists regarded the times as propitious for them and so did Margaret, who would thus have none of it.[69]

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[67] *Correspondance française*, 2: 384. Hoorn's pacification plan, 11 Sept. 1566.

[68] Le Barre, *Time of Troubles*, 156–181; EA 282, fo, 350–375. Correspondence concerning Flanders and Ghent, Sept. 1566.

[69] Ibid., 2: 387–394. Documents from Flanders, 7 September 1566; EA 244.2 and 244.5, pieces 14 and 15.

Despite criticism of his accord, Hoorn never lost confidence in his work, although he protested that the issue of religion perplexed him. He noted that single words, such as sermon, suddenly took on many meanings, making negotiations a tricky business. Sometimes Margaret gave him a sympathetic hearing but in other cases she rebuked him, often in his own words. He demanded greater moderation, but she contended that she could only be more accommodating when the times became suitable for compromise. She turned aside his request to be governor of Tournai and thus commander of its citadel. She also criticized the petition from Tournai's merchants, speaking as leaders of the new religion, which he passed along, because it sought to set their triumph in stone by allowing the construction of a temple paid for by an assessment on all residents. Margaret's inability to denounce the petition immediately made her fear that the remaining Catholics would be further alienated. However, they had previously given rather timid support to the regime, and she had to put her faith in the soldiers of the citadel.

Hoorn tested them by calling Moulbais to a public meeting in which he ordered the commander to accept the accord with the Calvinists and to stop threatening them from the citadel. Moulbais stood firm in the face of Hoorn, refusing to be intimidated by his grandeur and thus confirming the breach between Margaret's commanders and the traditional leaders of the aristocracy. In effect, Moulbais separated himself from Hoorn's accord and repudiated the provisions that allowed the Calvinists to participate in the militia and to hold services in the city. Margaret, delighted, praised Moulbais for the courage that enabled her to retain some independence of action. Nor did he acquiesce to the Calvinist demand that he renounce the use of force in the city, and Margaret seconded his blunt refusal, pleased that her small force made them apprehensive.[70]

In the northern provinces Margaret had worse luck. Dordrecht had managed to remain firm for Catholicism. Amsterdam, Haarlem, Delft, and Middlebourg led the list of places where disorder had prevailed. Some acts jarred her, but especially the calm petition of Limbourg requesting that she allow them to adopt the provisions of the German Augsburg Confession. Equally awful to Margaret, the members of the assembly at Nijmegen convoked a meeting without the permission of either the governor or the

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[70] EA 244.5, pieces 13–15. Letters of Hoorn and Margaret, 14–17 Sept. 1566; EA 353, fo. 111–116. Letters of Margaret and Moulbais, 21–24 Sept. 1566; *BCRH* 11, pt. 2: 421–422. Register of the Council of Tournai, Sept. 1566; *Correspondance française*, 3: 9–10. Letters of Hoorn and Margaret, 26 Sept. 1566.

magistrates. Megen reported the combination of force and legal petitions that brought sermons into Nijmegen as well as nearby Roermond, Hattem, and Bommel. He wanted to act, warning that sweet words did not assuage trouble.[71] In the south, Malines and Bois-le-Duc experienced equal disorder, with Calvinists claiming that the Accord allowed them to sack churches. Order in public life became uncertain and anything seemed possible. Maline's Catholics felt threatened and most church officers took flight. Indeed, the list of towns with extraordinary interpretations of the Accord seemed endless. Brussels and Louvain had to remain on a virtual war footing and Margaret worried about the presence of Nicholas de Hames in the capital, an open Calvinist protected by his privileges as a member of the Golden Fleece. She put him in charge of a detachment sent to the Balkans to fight the Turks in order to be free of him. That was a modest problem in comparison with other tests of her resolve. Megen, still angry over the regent's previous equivocation, viewed her without sympathy, but he knew that his own authority only traveled with him from place to place in Gelderland. As he put it, the rabble of each place stood ready to introduce preachers and other changes the moment he left. To tame them, he wanted her to do more than speak and write. He told of the assault on images in Batenborch in which Calvinists formally burned statues as heretics and warned that Catholics and those in the service of the king could follow. In response, Megen raised a few troops on his own in order to curb the brazenness of those in the countryside. A small show of force would, he felt, work wonders.[72]

Aremberg also faced a test of will in Overijssel. He lectured the deputies of all the towns about their duty, but in response, the townsmen denied wrongdoing, for they had restrained their people as long as possible. Aremberg clearly suspected them of connivance and saw in their loud laments dissimulation, yet he also noted that the deputies feared the forces at their door and did not want him to withdraw. While they preferred to describe the advocates of the new religion as students, imbeciles, and women who attended in search of novelty, the magistrates obviously did not have the slightest control over events. They reported a crisis in Kampen, where the plague claimed several victims who demanded communion in both kinds from their priest and then chose to die without sacraments when

[71] *Briefwisseling*, 201–203. Letters of Megen to Margaret, 14–15 Sept. 1566; Smetius, *Cronijk*, 128.

[72] *Briefwisseling*, 204–207. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 17–19 Sept. 1566.

he refused. Aremberg worried that the incident had provoked a sharp outcry from both sides, sharpening divisions with angry words.[73] Throughout Overijssel strife erupted between ardent Calvinists and those Catholic peasants and townsmen who had no intention of converting. Their resistance pleased Margaret when she heard of it, but she had no forces to support them and had to counsel Aremberg to seek compromise.[74]

Where violence had already hardened public affairs, the Confederates caused problems over jurisdictions and interpretations of the Accord, with its growing number of amendments. The Confederates regarded the limited pardon given to them as extending to those who had sacked the churches, claiming that iconoclasts could only be arrested if they had stolen something or despoiled objects with no sacred value. Their attitude complicated matters and stiffened Margaret's resolve to separate the bands of loyal soldiers and the few remaining untroubled towns from any contact with the Confederates. In her opinion the Calvinists also took advantage of the confusion to spread discord and blasphemy either in person or through the printed word. Catholics felt menaced and in some places, such as Tournai and Antwerp, they had become invisible. She accused the towns of allowing Catholic services and sacraments to become diminished, diluted, and placed in "vile dependence on the whim of perverts." Demands to increase the number of places where sermons could be held horrified her, as did Calvinist efforts to force adherence to their cause through intimidation and fines. Margaret came to the conclusion that the Calvinists had no sense of moderation and that they wanted to proceed step by step to their goal of complete domination and elimination of Catholicism, or else be lost themselves.[75]

The reports of Orange from Antwerp did not relieve her anxiety. The prince prepared an elaborate justification for his agreement with the Calvinists. Their numbers and the sheer vigor exhibited in iconoclasm gave them credibility to Orange, but he also acted to prevent outrages by the homeless and unemployed, who would act while huge crowds left the city to attend field sermons. When discussions in the Council of State raised questions about his motives, Orange demanded that Margaret replace him with someone who could meet the standards of the council. Viglius

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[73] *Correspondance française*, 2: 422–431. Letters of Aremberg and Margaret, 12–22 Sept. 1566.

[74] EA 292, fo. 99–160. Letters of Margaret and Aremberg and supporting documents, Sept. 1566.

[75] *Correspondance française*, 1: 154–166. Margaret to Philip, 13 Sept. 1566.

had asked Margaret to disavow the agreement, but Egmont encouraged her to practice duplicity with everyone involved in the interests of peace. Margaret instantly tried to calm Orange, soothing him with claims that anyone who maligned him did so to wreck public peace. In essence, she asked him to ignore what members of the council said in her presence and to continue to maintain order in Antwerp and control the growing troubles in Holland as well.[76] In her view, affairs continued to experience every kind of disorder. Catholic churchmen withdrew from cities and the few monastic establishments that remained became the object of open threats. Calvinists regarded the Cordeliers house in Antwerp as a center of opposition to them and large crowds gathered in an effort to intimidate the monks. Orange averted violence there, but in other cases the Calvinists easily forced monks to flee.

[76] *Correspondance… Orange*, 2: 231–235. Letters of William and Margaret, 11 and 13 September 1566; Hooft, *Nederlandse historien*, 42–45; *Notules de Berty*, in *Correspondance D'Orange*, 6: 422–424, Council of State 5 Sept. 1566.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISORDERED AND HATEFUL TIMES

1. *A Dexterous and Devious Response*

The smashing of images by the Calvinists created an uncertain and treacherous period in which local forces and personalities dominated. Margaret's regime was able to survive only by approaching each problem and situation separately. Confederate accounts vastly exaggerated Calvinist strength, leading Margaret to overestimate the power and popularity of the new religion. The reality was quite different, but information was confusing and contradictory. In Tournai, Beauvoir, the lieutenant in the citadel, and Hoorn made remarkably different reports after they had toured the city together to inspect the ruined churches. Hoorn solemnly stated that four out of every five Tournaisians had converted and that he wished to grant their wish to hold services in the city as the only means to keep them from further insurrection. In contrast, Beauvoir regarded the loud Calvinists as a small band of rowdy rabble in need of a thorough awakening to duty by his soldiers. When people cried out that they wanted to breakfast on the soldiers in the citadel, Beauvoir responded that it would be a very hard meal for them to digest, whereas Hoorn saw the threat as evidence that the troops should be removed. Caught in the middle, the magistrates squirmed, worried, and did nothing, precisely like their counterparts in many other cities.[1]

The magistrates of Valenciennes, thoroughly intimidated by their own people, asked Margaret's lieutenant Noircarmes to pacify the city. This was an impossible task. His only source of power came from the discomfort of those who sympathized with the new religion but were disheartened by the violence of iconoclasm. Noircarmes took the opportunity to challenge the magistrates on every issue, ordering them to take a stand and not to leave him at the mercy of the residents, in particular the artisans, whom they had been unable to control. He offered to help them

[1] Pasquier de le Barre, *Mémoires de Pasquier de le Barre et de Nicholas Soldoyer*, A. Pinchart ed. (Brussels: 1859–1865) 2: 375–380. Letters of Beauvoir and Hoorn to Margaret, 1 Sept. 1566.

only after they disarmed the city and curtailed freedom of religion. In his rebuke, Noircarmes first revealed the core of what would become Margaret's counterattack. Where Calvinists seemed isolated, she rejected all their demands and sought Catholic support to enable the effective use of the small forces at her disposal.[2]

However, fear and tension made public affairs unpredictable and such opportunities were rare. The Confederates never doubted that the Calvinists had changed political life and would thus have a part in governance. Margaret's own fear of and contempt for the Calvinists did not blind her to their strength. She came to believe that one necessary step, a dreaded one, involved the calling of an Estates General. The situation in September 1566 suggested that half the land would be lost if affairs drifted into civil war. She feared that the king wanted conflict, and tried to convince him of the destructive and futile character of efforts to defeat a religious idea on the battlefield. According to her political calculations, calling an Estates General seemed less dangerous than not doing so. The risk of losing religious orthodoxy in part of the land appeared desirable in comparison with a civil war that would subject all good citizens to evil. She hoped Catholics would stand up for their faith, challenging the Calvinists who, she heard, had grown cold to the idea of an Estates General, having become convinced that their insurrection had already earned them religious freedom. In an astute appraisal of the situation, Margaret also knew that any agreement would be limited to those provinces with the right to representation and that the divisive nature of the factions so evident in the provinces might keep any single group from acquiring sufficient power to dominate.[3] Hence, despite its limitations, she and the Council of State convinced themselves that the method for avoiding civil war centered on discussing the problem at an Estates General. She begged Philip to act since the situation was decaying at an alarming rate. Margaret calculated that each day without funds or resolution caused a month's harm, and each month a year's.[4]

Problems in Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Ghent served as examples. The Council of State repeatedly discussed what Orange was doing in Antwerp,

[2] EA 244.2 has numerous documents from all the parties involved; *Correspondance française*, 2: 433–434. Noircarmes to Margaret, 19 Sept. 1566; C. Paillard, *Histoire des troubles à Valenciennes, 1566–1567*, 4 vols. (Brussels: 1874–1876), 4: 40–48.

[3] *Correspondance française*, 2: 164. Margaret to Philip, 13 Sept. 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 1: 156–175.

[4] *Correspondance française*, 2: 167. Margaret to Philip, 27 Sept. 1566.

fearing that his concessions to the Calvinists were too great. However, they also dreaded the spread of trouble to Amsterdam, and its magistrates refused to deal with anyone except the prince. Hence peace in two of the most important cities in the Netherlands depended on Orange even as Margaret and Mansfeld expressed apprehension over his accord in Antwerp.[5] Egmont also posed problems. Despite his prestige, he could not control the situation in Ghent and came to be perceived as a threat by both sides. The Catholics feared that he would draw up an accord affirming Calvinist power. In contrast, the Calvinists regarded Egmont as the potential source of retribution for iconoclasm. Some fled, but others remained, grumbling and threatening order. In response, Egmont and the magistrates of Ghent issued an ordinance that attempted to calm feeling by giving Calvinism a place in public life, assuring them that difficulties would be discussed and resolved in an open forum. He sought Margaret's approval for their inclusion in all official meetings and for the granting of a general pardon, items that caused her to delay discussion of his entire project.[6]

Egmont argued forcefully for a pardon. He warned of the alternative, the spread of panic that would cause people to cease working and flee. A limited pardon would calm the situation and put people back to work. He exaggerated the number of Calvinists and portrayed them as ferocious in defending their faith. Writing from Ypres, he claimed that the villagers of Lower Flanders had all converted to Calvinism and had heard sermons in their churches before the Accord; hence they had the right to continue the practice. Disrespectful of authority, the Calvinists became a symbol to him of the immoderate nature of the times and his near helplessness before events. Margaret acknowledged the logic of his argument, but claimed that the people must not expect a pardon before they had disarmed, restored the churches, and admitted to their error.[7]

None of the agreements reached in the provinces provided a permanent solution, but they represented all she could do until men and money became available. She wrote to Tisnacq in Madrid that while her efforts had failed to resolve the situation, they had achieved more than the king's

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[5] Berty, *Notules*, meetings of the Council of State on 9, 11 and 15 September 1566, in *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d'Orange*, Gachard, ed. 6 vols. (Brussels: 1847–1866), 6: 424–426.

[6] *Correspondance française*. 2: 435–440. Margaret and Egmont's letters and his proposal for pacification and pardon.

[7] Ibid., 2: 435–442. Egmont to Margaret, 16 Sept. 1566; *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle (1565–1586)* E. Poullet and C. Piot, eds (Brussels: 1878–1896), 1: 454. Report of Morillon on attacking iconoclasts, Sept. 1566.

angry words. Thus she continued to dispatch members of the Order and even some of her own councilors to negotiate local agreements, promoting particular, pragmatic relationships to maintain peace. Megen continually pointed out the inadequacy of her response, but she rejoined with a lament, bewailing how the lack of force allowed "execrable acts". Margaret challenged him to give order to the situation and offered to make his plans general throughout the provinces if he met with success. Otherwise, he should admit that her admonitions and entreaties remained the only methods available to arrest the progress of the "disease" in public affairs that increased the atmosphere of license and liberty.[8] Hoping for better times, she ordered Megen to be dexterous and devious in his negotiations.

Sometimes deviousness worked, as in Venlo, where Megen encouraged the magistrates to place the issue of preaching in the town before the populace. Since the Calvinists remained few in number, they declined to participate and the magistrates chased the preacher away. However, the opposite happened in Roermond, where the preacher virtually assumed full control. A lack of uniformity of response plagued Megen, for one village supported him while another calmly continued to smash images. Confrontation in Nijmegen worked to his advantage, with the bourgeoisie uniting to defend churches and to oust the minority of Calvinists. He hastened to inform Margaret of such successes, trying to encourage her to reject petitions for freedom of religion. He bluntly warned that Orange did not speak for him and he denounced leaders of the Order who spoke against iconoclasm while their followers indulged in it. The times thus became increasingly dangerous and Megen asked Margaret to establish a code for their letters if she wanted to have frank information from him. His own activities became more forceful and he acted without direct orders. Megen even edited her letters to the towns and villages where he negotiated settlements, hardening what she said and, in rude terms, telling her precisely what he had done. Since his policies had restored order to places that Margaret had thought utterly lost, she expressed delight at both Megen's deeds and transgressions.[9]

Other news from the northern provinces occasioned less pleasure. Margaret dispatched Aremberg to pacify Leeuwarden in Frisia. There, attacks on the churches verged on open rebellion and, desperate, she found funds

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[8] P. Cuypers van Velthoven, *Documents pour servir à l'histoire des troubles religieux du XVI^e^ siècle dans la Brabant septentriional. Bois-Le-Duc (1566–1570)* (Brussels: 1858), 59–62. Letters, 18–22 Sept. 1566.

[9] *Briefwisseling*, 208–234. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 19–30 Sept. 1566.

to raise two hundred troops to assist in restoring order. The open defection of some Catholic priests to the new religion complicated the situation in Leeuwarden, and Aremberg expressed shock at the number of people who followed only their own opinions. When he visited Overijssel, Aremberg found an equally difficult situation. Everywhere the commoners demanded to be consulted prior to reaching any agreements, and they often raised issues that he said reflected long-standing grievances and not just religious concerns. Margaret responded to his depressing account with yet more bad news, telling him that Calvinists in Deventer wanted the city to attack Zutphen because the Catholics there had turned away a preacher.[10]

By the end of September, Margaret had a firm idea of the damage the insurrection had caused to religion and the commonwealth. The Calvinists, in her assessment, had political motives that, although cloaked in religion, actually called for the creation of a government wholly to their liking. Aremberg forwarded a petition from members of the Frisian aristocracy that confirmed her fears. It boldly called for freedom of conscience because the people wanted a change in religion. They repudiated Spanish politics and the Catholic religion alike since the placards and inquisitorial practices had embittered the populace. The situation seemed worse with the townsmen, led by the regents of Leeuwarden, who negotiated without the least respect for his authority as a member of the Order. However not all Frisians had converted to Calvinism, and many advocated the restoration of Catholic services and the removal of priests who abandoned their faith but remained in their churches. Similar problems plagued Groningen as the spread of Calvinist practices, including baptisms, occasioned both joy and anger among residents. Aremberg claimed to pay particular attention to the "humors" of the people but remained uncertain as to their religious opinions. Margaret praised his efforts and candor. She expressed great distress over the unchallenged defection of clergy who preached the new religion from the pulpits of the old, to her a horrid example of deceit. Yet she knew that the Catholic hierarchy shared the blame, for bishops rarely knew or cared about the character of their priests.[11]

In the countryside the battle between the religions continued during September and October with the destruction of some rural monasteries. A group of women attacked a monastery near Delft and left it in ruins. The

[10] *Correspondance française*, 3: 13–19. Letters of Margaret and Aremberg, 24–30 Sept. 1566.
[11] Ibid., 3: 20–31, 2–10 Oct. 1566.

monks there fled to towns, only to find churches wrecked and monasteries closed. Margaret listed the towns and cities of each province where she thought disorder had triumphed and seditious and evil forces prepared for war. Where Catholic services continued, the celebrations occurred in the midst of ruined statues, paintings, altars, and decorations, making those who attended feel threatened. In Antwerp, all Catholic activities suffered interruption and Margaret feared that at any moment the city would become another Geneva or Munster. Orange's presence seemed to help, but the regent and he regarded one another with mutual suspicion. The prince had become neatly caught in the impossible situation created by the insurrection. He represented a discredited government, yet no alternative center of power had emerged. The Calvinists appeared to be the strongest party, but they could not act on their own. Thus Margaret's regime remained necessary and the Calvinists had to petition the government if they wanted to accomplish something through legal means instead of force. They became furious about the Anabaptists in Antwerp, who took advantage of the spirit of religious freedom to hold their own services. Thus Calvinists requested that Orange obtain an edict prohibiting their sermons. Margaret recognized the absurdity of the petition and responded by refusing to distinguish among various Protestant activities, all of which she regarded as illegal. Nor did she want to be put into Orange's uncomfortable position of seeming to advocate one group over another, and she delighted in contemplating the destructive nature of the diversity of opinion and doctrine within Protestantism.[12]

Antwerp, Tournai, and Valenciennes represented the extreme, and in most other areas Calvinists presumption was merely irksome. Margaret and the councils occasionally responded to them with surprisingly harsh language, denouncing in Flanders the abominable crimes of the "heretics" since the presence of units loyal to her permitted bold words. She certainly practiced greater discretion in other provinces. Overall, Margaret could not yet act against "maddening heresies" and she had to consider the plight of a newly persecuted Catholic church. She wrote to Philip of limitations placed on services as Calvinists permitted only the presentation of a low mass by priests without vestments. Nor could the Catholics clean the churches or clear them of rubble. In many areas churches stood empty, with clerics, monks, and nuns in peril. In contrast, she reported

[12] Ibid., 1: 167–174. Margaret to Philip, 27 Sept. 1566; Berty, *Notules* for the meetings of the Council of State, 3, 10 and 11 September 1566, in *Correspondance d'Orange*, 6: 428–9.

bitterly that the Calvinists "dogmatized" at will, even on working days, and offered every sort of service.[13]

September and October 1566 marked a low point for Margaret. Dismayed and disheartened, she felt compelled to enter into a series of agreements that seemed to endorse the insurrection. Isolated areas continued to suffer disorders, and firm policies eluded her. Confederates and leaders of the Golden Fleece, especially Orange, Hoorn, and Egmont, made accords in her name, but these scarcely pleased her and she dissembled shamelessly in implementing their provisions. She acquiesced where no loyal troops remained, and increased forces where they did, virtually flaunting her disregard for local accords. Her duplicity represented only a part of a general rearrangement of authority as magistrates, Calvinists, and aristocrats all sought to arrange new relationships. Margaret repeatedly heard of gatherings of Confederates or of preachers. Fifteen preachers met at Ghent, but Orange reported that they concluded nothing.[14]

Several issues remained unresolved. The Calvinists demanded the right to prepare places to hold services in the cities before winter came, but Margaret disputed their claims wherever possible. She defined the Accord to suit her own purposes in areas where she had troops, claiming in Tournai that the agreement forbade scandal and disorder, which she blandly equated with sermons, to the fury of the Calvinists. Where she had no troops, she avoided offending the new religion. Another issue involved the forces raised by the Calvinists, which Margaret wanted disbanded. Calvinists resisted, as did some Confederates who enjoyed positions of command over the ill-trained units. They in turn petitioned Margaret to remove soldiers from Tournai and positions near Valenciennes, requests she simply ignored. Another sensitive problem involved the disposition of church treasure seized during the iconoclasm. From places of safety, Catholic churchmen demanded the return of the wealth, whereas the Calvinists deemed the loot public property and wanted the magistrates of each town to use it to fund poor relief and to encourage economic activity. Margaret regarded each of these issues as a test of strength, and she elected to stand firm in claiming to control all armed men and church treasure.[15]

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[13] *Correspondance française*, 1: 173.

[14] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 249. September 1566.

[15] EA 244.5, pieces 12–14. Exchange of letters between Margaret and Hoorn, 2–7 Sept. 1566. A number of other documents relating to Brussels and Valenciennes are in the same collection and also in Paillard, *Histoire des troubles à Valenciennes*.

The Council of State debated all these issues, although without the participation of the leaders of the Fleece. Along with Margaret and Mansfeld, the council gradually developed a firm if limited plan. Part of Margaret's determination stemmed from her confidence in those aristocrats and captains who remained faithful, especially Megen in Gelderland and Noircarmes in Flanders. Megen seemed fearless in the face of Calvinist pressure. He raised troops on his own, coerced reluctant magistrates to act, spurned Calvinist petitions, and engaged in guerilla warfare against Confederates and preachers. He sent out detachments of soldiers, perhaps selected for their unorthodox skills, to kidnap preachers and to intercept and rob transfers of money that the Confederates raised. While his efforts enjoyed only modest success, they obviously unnerved the opposition, which complained bitterly, to his great delight. However, Megen also knew that he could not resolve the issue without larger forces. Catholics remained, but he described them as hiding like ants, continuing to be passive witnesses to assaults on their churches.

Margaret asked him to continue his labors, isolating recalcitrant places and imposing a timetable for restoration of images. However, Nijmegen, Arnhem, and Zutphen in particular became more dangerous. Margaret had wanted him to travel to each area to encourage pacification, but he reacted with caution, sensing that to arrive without force would invite confrontation and serve no purpose, but to arrive with force would be to have the gates slammed in his face.[16] Megen had little influence in the larger cities, which simply ignored his wishes. He met Aremberg in October to confer on the disorders and told Margaret to cease dissimulating and to act. They knew that the Confederates, despite their considerable influence, had trouble funding their troops and greatly exaggerated the number at their disposal. They wanted her to meet them away from the court and alone. While she would have loved to quit the place, Margaret's position bound her to Brussels. Also, Philip effectively froze her government by his refusal to let her negotiate with the provinces and the Estates General. Thus she had to continue to offer only words, hoping that her governors would themselves be able to field small forces.[17]

Megen had boundless confidence in being able to extort money from the cities that had indulged in violence but in which many citizens had

[16] *Briefwisseling*, 235–263, letters of Margaret and Megen, 2–11 Oct. 1566.

[17] Ibid., 263–285. Letters of Margaret, Megen and the Council of Gelderland, 12–19 Oct. 1566; Van Hasselt, 1: 47–49; Smetius, *Chronijk*, 134 for affairs in Nijmegen.

second thoughts about the virtues of Calvinism. He felt that with fifty thousand florins in hand, order in Gelderland would quickly be restored and he could exact a much greater sum from timid magistrates. He also encouraged Margaret to believe that opinion might turn against the Confederates, something she frankly did not consider possible because she had an exaggerated view of Confederate strength. Megen also became concerned about Philip's plans, for he based his hopes on offering a pardon to any who would abandon the Confederate cause. Margaret's refusal to commit herself to his policy made him warn her of the danger from Confederates who would do vastly greater damage if she did not confront them. He did not particularly fear those he called "latter day beggars," but he respected the potential they presented as leaders of the ardent Calvinist group. Margaret shared his opinion, but the facts necessitated caution, since success in Gelderland might occasion reaction and lead to reversals in Brabant and Flanders. Thus she wanted him to act against the towns piecemeal and refused to be forthcoming on statements of general policy.[18]

In Flanders Margaret's forces also acted more freely. Noircarmes compelled Enghien and Mons to contain Calvinists, and soldiers at Furnes resisted an armed assault, killing several of the attackers.[19] These experiences made her ready to organize a general attack to save the land, not from the Calvinists, but from the king. He had left her in pitiful financial condition for years, helping to create the factions and forces then confronting her. A royal visit would help to end the disorders, but only if he came without force. She felt confident about restoring partial order, but knew that neither she nor her councils had the status or power to achieve full pacification. Reality limited her plans because her every move faced contradictions and formalities imposed by her weak position as regent for a distant and controlling monarch. In addition, the Calvinists deliberately subverted order, sending preachers to every area and regarding all things as lawful if done in their name. To her, their actions had led to great violence, abandonment of reason in public affairs, and a thorough subversion of justice. They disputed or ignored the Brussels government and concentrated on dominating provincial and city authorities. The Calvinists called for action on the supposition that Philip planned to attack the provinces,

[18] *Briefwisseling*, 289–301. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 20–25 Oct. 1566.

[19] *Correspondance française*, 3: 64. Lord of Loueuse to Margaret, 8 Oct. 1566; *BCRH* 8: 53–54. Registers of the Council of Tournai, 5–14 Oct. 1566.

executing many, and enslaving the rest of his subjects. Margaret was amazed at how quickly Calvinists could, in her words, contaminate a town with such suspicions.

Their assault challenged the entire administration of justice. Iconoclasts remained unpunished, which meant that most other judicial affairs stopped as well. Well endowed, in her opinion, with a capacity for malice and meanness, the Calvinists even began to repudiate the Accord that protected them. She felt that the Calvinists anticipated Philip's rejection of the Accord and believed that they must triumph completely before he returned to the Netherlands. The Calvinists dominated affairs by boldness, but she knew that they remained divided. In towns internal divisions flourished, for not all supported the new religion and many resented the growing impoverishment the troubles occasioned. She related all this to Philip to encourage him to come to the Netherlands to act like a king, that is, as their father Charles V had, facing the situation not with an army but with the Estates General.[20]

As Margaret finished her latest appeal, which accompanied a long, sad report on the state of affairs, Philip's replies to her letters of August arrived. His attitude once again shocked her and she concealed the contents to prevent the already bad situation from becoming frightful.[21] Philip repudiated her pacification plan and claimed that an Estates General could bring not good, "But . . . pernicious things, the most evident being the danger of falling through it into freedom of religion and confusion in the commonwealth, things directly contrary to my conscience and authority." As for the regent's role, her only task was to make use of the people who still wished to serve her to combat those who did not. He sent her letters for the individual estates expressly forbidding the convocation of an Estates General, claiming that it would be better to suppress those who demanded one and then to sit back to see what God wished to have happen.[22] Thus she did not even take the full text to the Council of State for fear of losing the last shred of aristocratic support. Although chagrined, Margaret continued efforts to achieve some measure of peace in the midst of continued troubles. Local habits and loyalties became dominant and the powerful interests of the leaders of the Golden Fleece prevented any uniform response from Brussels. For Margaret this was both a curse and a blessing,

[20] *Correspondance française*, 1: 175–177. Margaret to Philip, 27 Sept. 1566.
[21] Ibid., 1: 179–180. Philip to Margaret, 3 Oct. 1566.
[22] Ibid., 1: 180–181. Philip to Margaret, 3 Oct. 1566.

for she could not undertake a single plan of action, but neither could those who opposed her. German princes with whom she corresponded about raising troops warned her that some aristocrats had begun an attempt to transfer all authority vested in the king to their individual hands. Many favored the Confederates, but others pursued their own particular interests. Where the Confederates had forces, the Calvinists became emboldened. The residents of the village of Harderwyck continued their defiance, sacking churches and attacking a royal magazine to obtain its artillery. The Confederates ignored Margaret's protests over the deed, and their leaders, Brederode and Culemburg, continued their activities in trying to disrupt Nijmegen. Culemburg even assisted in the destruction of a church, an act that provoked a sharp rebuke from Orange and Hoorn and an accusation of insanity from Margaret.[23]

A few towns in the north engaged in a magisterial reformation, bringing the provisions of the Augsburg Confession to their communities without reference to any other authority. Aremberg in Overijssel and Megen in Groningen received demands from a variety of reformed groups. Although his letters contained little but bad news, Megen remained sure that a few small professional units of soldiers could easily restore order. Margaret estimated that ten thousand soldiers would accomplish the task, but she had to ask Philip for the funds. As the reports of sacking and pillaging of churches flooded Brussels, subsidies and regular tax revenues dried up. Trouble finally arrived in the still-prosperous cities of Amsterdam and Utrecht, which suddenly fell into turmoil as crowds of "rabble" assisted by some wealthy citizens attacked the monasteries, driving out the monks and wrecking images. Margaret felt particularly astonished to hear of an assault on statues by women in Amsterdam. Jullaan ter Meulen hurled her shoe at a revered image of Mary in the Old Church. Although the deed was done in the midst of widespread iconoclasm, the offense resulted in her execution by drowning. Shocked by the tumult, the magistrates appealed for the return of their governor, Orange, who felt that he had pacified Antwerp as much as was possible and expressed willingness return and try the same in Holland. When he first arrived in Utrecht, Orange managed to initiate an accord with modest concessions to the Calvinists but he recognized danger from starving residents as well as

[23] Ibid., 1: 182–184. Margaret to Philip, 10 Oct. 1566.

religious dissidents. When he departed at the end of October, peace and quiet left with him.[24]

Having become suspicious of the prince's motives, Margaret hesitated to endorse his activities in Utrecht, Zeeland, and Holland. Orange had made concessions to the Calvinists in Antwerp that exceeded the powers given to him in her instructions. Therefore sending him to Amsterdam might accomplish ends as unworthy in her eyes as those resulting from inaction. She also suspected the motives of Hoogstraten when he asked to replace Orange in Antwerp. While he had pacified Malines with little difficulty, Hoogstraten's subsequent behavior troubled Margaret deeply, especially his release and pardon of iconoclasts held in that city. She condemned the act and brushed aside his assertions that he effected the release as the only way to avert even greater dangers. On the other hand, when he responded that he had done nothing that Orange had not done in Antwerp and asked if she wished to overturn the prince's work, he forced Margaret to acquiesce. In the Council of State, Margaret stated that the malicious nature of the times required unsavory deeds, but she could not bring herself to be pleased with those who actually did them.[25]

Orange caused special concern. He was exceptional in being able to speak freely with Calvinist, Confederate, and court, but the nature of his discussions often varied from what Margaret desired. While Orange kept the Calvinists from using church buildings in Antwerp, he did not try to stop them from the construction of five temples in the suburbs. For fear of seeming to agree with what he did, Margaret refused to even acknowledge his report on the subject. However, she had to seek his help in those provinces where he held governorships, and Orange arranged a series of compromises and accords in Holland. The magistrates of Amsterdam, followed by those of Utrecht and then the members of provincial councils, rejected his initial efforts to impose moderate agreements. They feared angering the Confederates, saying that a thousand enemies stood ready to fall on them and the remaining Catholics. They also dismissed Orange's call for rendering justice in the matter of iconoclasm. Nevertheless, Orange issued ordinances that specified locations for sermons and even limited their content. He began to describe Amsterdam as a city full of foreigners from northern provinces that produced unreasonable men

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[24] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 250–267, Letters of William and Margaret, 6 Oct.–7 Nov. 1566; R. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: 1965), 57.

[25] G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini a Cosimo et Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1577*, Battistine ed., (Brussels-Rome: 1949), 275–278.

with barbaric habits and a different view of religion. Margaret decried his suggestion that trade regulated religion and that foreigners had the right to disrupt the order of the commonwealth. In a direct and honest reply, Orange claimed that vast numbers followed the new Protestant religion and that the merchants and burgers wanted exactly what other cities had in religious rights. Therefore he issued a new accord and asked to be relieved of his offices if she rejected it.[26]

Margaret had no choice in Amsterdam, but remained silent on his agreement except to chide Orange for finding obscure meaning in her clear orders. Likewise, she had difficulty accepting what Hoorn had done in Tournai and actually thwarted his efforts to take control of its citadel. Margaret feared Hoorn's anger because she used his services to pacify a city that seemed hopelessly corrupt and beyond her personal control, but she never ratified the specific terms of his agreements with the Calvinists. All sensitive issues, such as the formation of a militia and preaching within the city, once resolved by Hoorn, received only her tacit approval. She voiced her true feelings of frustration and anger in the correspondence she maintained with Moulbais, who commanded the citadel.[27]

Then Egmont, busy pacifying Flanders, attracted her suspicions. Whilst she disliked his independence in dealing with the Calvinists and his indifference toward her orders, she needed him. In Bois-le-Duc Margaret tried to achieve pacification by sending minor aristocrats from the Council of Brabant. Everyone simply ignored them. Nor were the Calvinists always content with their treatment and were never fully satisfied in either religious or political matters. The convocation of a synod of preachers in Ghent from all over Flanders in early October surprised her. While Margaret had only meager information on the meeting, she found it easy to believe that the substance of the discussion involved an uprising to sweep the last vestiges of Catholicism from the whole area, using Antwerp and Ghent as bases. According to some reports, the Calvinists planned to seize strategic towns and complete their armed organization by holding a general synod, a prospect hateful to her.[28]

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[26] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 270–292. 2 November–1 December 1566; A.T. Van Deursen, *Willem van Oranje: een biografish portret* (Amsterdam: 1995), 40.

[27] EA 244.5, pieces 12–15. Letters of Margaret, Hoorn and the magistrates of Tournai, Sept. 1566; EA 353, fo. 110–120. Letters exchanged between Margaret and Moulbais, Sept.–Oct. 1566.

[28] *Correspondance française*, 1: 181–191. Margaret to Philip, 10 Oct. 1566.

2. *Margaret's Plan to Restore Order*

During October 1566, Margaret slowly gathered forces and began to formulate a positive plan against the Calvinists. She did not have an auspicious start. In the early weeks of the process she seemed confounded by mounting disorders and the growing hostility from the Confederates and the leading members of the Golden Fleece, whom she had not included in her plans. All of her efforts also collided at their inception with the indifference of the king and the paralysis of local officials, even though many of them became more loyal to her as Calvinist leaders began to demand place and power. Margaret still dreamed that she could master the problems on her own initiative and an Estates General if Philip would only cease his objections. Marshaling all her authority as regent and governess, she undertook a project to restore order piecemeal, dispatching small units of soldiers who moved from place to place quelling the Calvinist insurrection. She hoped to engage the king in the process, drawing him closer to her views, but from the beginning Margaret feared that these steps would come too late, and she openly blamed the king, who had responded slowly and badly to all events. Royal obstinacy remained a problem, although Philip did send some funds, which eased the stress at court. She and Mansfeld then began the series of encounters that would ultimately pacify the land. First they attacked preaching, hoping to cause the less ardent Calvinists to distance themselves from the new religion. Next, Margaret acted on her own, making a public display of her faith, abandoning for the moment her customary reserve and leading a procession of a hundred members of the court on a pilgrimage to a shrine to the Virgin Mary in Brussels. Her large retinue paraded behind her and performed reverences at the shrine and then later in the court chapel. A large and noisy military review ended the day. Given the reports of Calvinist popularity in Brussels, her decision was courageous and bold. When she did not use the event as an opportunity to flee Brussels, her prestige grew. Some even compared her to her first guardian, likening her to the great Margaret of Austria.[29]

The pilgrimage was a remarkable moment, but it did not resolve any of the major problems. Philip had created the impression that everyone in the Netherlands had become the object of his anger and contempt. Royal

[29] Francesco Marchi, *Cento Letteri*, Ronchini ed., (Rome: 1864), 116–120; Jane de Iongh, *Madama. Margaretha van Oostenrijk* (Amsterdam: 1967), 330.

disregard for the Golden Fleece had prompted a secret meeting among Orange, Egmont, Hoorn, Hoogstraten, and Louis of Nassau in early October. Margaret, who never lacked information about the leading households of the land, knew that their reaction verged on conspiracy. They knew that "Your Majesty has an incredible anger over the damage, sacking and despoiling of churches, cloisters and monasteries and that you wish to take vengeance and to chastise those who dissimulated and suffered these outrages, and, to that end, you have decided to come soon with forces and weapons to punish the rebels over here."[30] Orange thought that Philip wanted him killed and the others shared similar convictions. Despite her differences with each member of the Fleece, Margaret had tried to convince them that their fears lacked substance. She was unwilling to believe that the king would act in such a manner. However, Montigny and Berghes remained in Spain, clearly under duress and already feeling Philip's wrath, thus giving the alarm to their peers in the Netherlands.

While Margaret had definite political reasons for trying to calm troubled waters, she also hoped to create an alternative to Spanish plans for the destruction of people and places offensive to the king. However, her own reports provided evidence against the Netherlands. She needed the leaders of the Golden Fleece and the Confederates to govern places where insurrection had broken out, but became discontented with the agreements each had entered into with the Calvinists, and she complained to the king. Margaret also dissimulated, making the tasks of the aristocrats more difficult by delaying the confirmation of agreements whenever possible and trying to circumvent many of the provisions they had negotiated. She acknowledged that such a policy had limits after Egmont bluntly informed her that aristocratic complaints involved both Brussels and Madrid. Yet accusations that she wanted to harm or even assassinate them arose from, in her words, pure fantasy.

Nor, as she began to implement her plans against the Calvinists, did Margaret abandon her belief in the need for diversity of opinion and power in the Netherlands. She sought restoration and compromise, not domination. Therefore she reported the news of conspiratorial gatherings of the aristocracy to the king along with continued pleas for the convocation of an Estates General. The debates within the aristocracy over

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[30] *Correspondance française*, 3: 2–9. Margaret's letters from Tisnacq and Courteville always reported royal inaction on her reports, and her letters to Berghes and Montigny showed that she wanted them back in the Netherlands to help with pacification, 4–16 Oct. 1566.

religion and rule did not invalidate her belief in the traditional system. While she often feared the independence of the aristocracy and the growing influence of the townsmen of the third estate, she felt that the times made a meeting necessary, and the king had to play a part in it. In her opinion, a just prince compromised, and the mechanism for achieving that in the Netherlands remained the Estates General. At no time did Margaret think it would be necessary to change religion in the provinces; rather, the proper method to reduce the Calvinists would be found in discussion of the problem. Delay already had dire consequences as provinces armed and prepared for war. In such circumstances "bad subjects" quickly gained ascendancy over the good.[31]

There was no question about the presence of bad subjects and the need for drastic action to contain them. She did not intend for the Estates General to resolve the conflict by offering power to the authors of insurrection. Rather she wanted discussions to find a peaceful method for restoring order based on prior conditions. Nor did she reject the use of force. Margaret's orders to loyal units in the countryside remained firm: resist Calvinist efforts whenever possible. She delighted in relating to Philip the details of the Calvinist attack on the walls of Furnes in an effort to free some of their brethren held in the town's prison. The small force at Furnes, furnished by Egmont and under Margaret's orders, not only resisted, but retaliated and took more prisoners. The infuriated Calvinists came back and threatened to besiege the town with forty thousand men, but she ordered the magistrates to punish the "thieves and disturbers of public peace" immediately. Margaret felt genuinely pleased when she could strike out in that fashion against the peremptory behavior of the Calvinists. Much of the rest of the time she felt at the mercy of events and worried about a renewed insurrection designed to finish the Catholic Church and plunder the rich. The behavior of the Calvinists and the panic of magistrates did nothing to allay her apprehension. Frightened magistrates indulged in a wild bout of arming their subjects, even though they acknowledged that the expense became ruinous and that the men placed under arms might be the very ones they feared. She caustically noted that Ghent spent more in a month on militia then it had in a year on tax payments.[32]

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[31] Ibid., 1: 192–196. Margaret to Philip, 12 Oct. 1566.

[32] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 1: 191–231. Le Barre details all of the worries both regent and magistrates had about the militias.

She did not equivocate with the Confederates. Margaret brusquely rejected demands by Brederode that she accept his justification for a levy of troops he made at Vianen. Had she done so, Margaret knew that it would have affirmed his personal authority to raise forces and established a precedent for independent action. Brederode had supporters in all the cities of the north and rumor gave him a formidable following in Amsterdam and Utrecht, where the magistrates feared him. Indeed, Brederode symbolized the problems facing Margaret as the weather grew colder. He encouraged the Calvinists in their adamant demands for churches to use during the winter, disregarding their habit of importing new politics into towns along with sermons. Since poverty increased as commercial life diminished precipitously, Margaret feared that war on the Catholic rich would accompany the Calvinist intrusion. The times remained cheerless and in places where she had no troops, such as Bois-le-Duc, Calvinist crowds menaced loyal officials in their own homes. Where Calvinists felt thwarted, they threatened to burn their own cities and where they triumphed, they allowed no opposition. In her opinion, troops had become a necessity in every town with a Calvinist presence and for the first time she sensed that soldiers would prove to be an antidote to civil strife rather than a cause. However, to put her plans into effect she had to have money, some 40,000 florins per month.[33]

Hopeful that she would receive the necessary funding from Philip, she and the Council of State prepared to act, preparing lists of good and bad cities. The good cities received letters praising their loyalty to crown and church, and the bad received a stern warning. Margaret accused them of allowing preaching, iconoclasm, and disorder. She warned that they had better halt all disorderly activities, for royal power had its basis in divine, natural, and human laws that allowed a ruler to use force against force. In a direct challenge to the magistrates, Margaret ordered them to attack the Calvinists as the authors of devastation in the provinces that robbed the king of his just authority. They must restore royal authority or the crown would undertake the task, resulting in a wholesale loss of privileges. Only Antwerp did not receive the warning, for Margaret dismissed the city as totally corrupt and refused to sign any missive to them.[34] Simultaneously, Margaret prepared a list of loyal captains and she asked Philip to promote them in rank and social status. She wanted them to move with confidence,

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[33] *Correspondance française*, 1: 196–199. Margaret to Philip, 16 Oct. 1566.
[34] Ibid., 3: 63. October, 1566.

and thus they had to be on a footing equal to all but the leading members of the Golden Fleece. They had given her faithful service for years, and in 1566 they represented strength in a time she described as inflamed, corrupt, and foul. They alone assisted her in standing up against a multitude demanding mutation in all matters of faith and rule, and she was determined to achieve a true restoration of order with their assistance before the king returned.[35]

However, she knew her adversaries also wanted to accomplish their goals before any royal visit, which lent urgency to her plans. In effect, Margaret announced her intention to accomplish Philip's plans for him, hoping thereby to avert any massive use of royal force. She also had to prevent the involvement of German or French interests. Margaret had feared for years that the troubles of France would spill over into the Netherlands, and in 1566 she came to worry about the German princes. Several had written encouraging her to adopt the provisions of the Augsburg Confession that allowed each prince to determine the religion of his province. Frederick, the Elector Palatine, shocked Margaret with his open Calvinism in a letter in which he simply dismissed traditional religion as idolatrous and condemned her resistance to Calvinism as an attack on true prophets.[36]

To counter the possibility that like-minded princes might intervene, Margaret wrote directly to Chantonay, her ambassador in Vienna, building a case for her actions and asking the emperor, her cousin Maximilian, to restrain any German involvement. Margaret understood the Calvinists, depicting them as a force that moved furiously, like fire, affecting every aspect of life. In addition to their attack on the church, they had challenged magistrates and then royal authority in order to control civic order, education, public assistance, and the maintenance of troops. She said that Calvinism had no end other than "liberty and the confusion of the commonwealth." Thus she asked Chantonay to appeal for an imperial prohibition of levies of German mercenaries by Confederates. In response, Chantonay pointed out that the prohibition and her own efforts collided with reality, for the Germans felt free to raise soldiers to fight for whatever cause they pleased. Religion meant nothing to these mercenaries. He reminded her of Charles V's statement that whoever has the money has the Germans. However, Margaret wanted imperial approval for her plan,

[35] Ibid., 1: 200. Margaret to Philip, 18 Oct. 1566.
[36] Ibid., 3: 42–45 and 65. Letters from German princes, Oct. 1566.

which marked a repudiation of her own previous policy. She could say freely to Chantonay that she had been forced into the Accord and had never intended to allow anyone the right to change religion according to individual taste.[37]

Margaret also needed affirmation of the German levies being made by Megen, associating these with legitimate governance. Even though Megen did not always act or speak to her liking, she valued his forthright and vigorous character. He wanted to compete with the Confederates for the allegiance of towns in a conflict spawned by what he saw as blasphemous preaching against God and king that encouraged insubordination and mutiny.[38] In Margaret's perception, the insurrection had separated people into loyal and disloyal groups, and no collective responsibility for the Calvinist uprising existed. Prior to the insurrection, the opposition to Philip's rule had been troublesome but loyal, and her political world had ample room for such behavior. The Calvinists had taken advantage of the situation, and their complete departure from traditional politics and religion had caused many opponents of Philip's absolutism to have second thoughts. In Margaret's view, the time had come for those people to rally and join her in a limited but decisive attack on the Calvinists. She knew that the nature of the problem precluded the full restoration of church and commonwealth. Too many cities remained highly inflamed with the zeal of the new faith and she could only return them to obedience, not to the church. At that time, she planned to attack only the preachers and other leaders, or "dogmatizers," who had become so accustomed to sedition and disobedience that they would not discuss any limitation on their behavior. However, her concept of extirpation of heresy stopped there, leaving the followers of the new religion to be cowed and tamed by the force employed against their leadership.

Margaret did not underestimate the difficulty of the task. She knew how thoroughly the Calvinists had organized themselves. They collected taxes, recruited soldiers, negotiated with arms dealers, formed leagues and consistories, administered justice, and distributed poor relief.[39] In her calls for the Calvinists to cease activities that usurped traditional authority, Margaret clearly announced her willingness to join battle to reassert royal control. She boldly told the Calvinists that their right to have sermons, which

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[37] Ibid., 3: 144–147. Letters of Margaret and Chantonay, 16 Nov.–21 Dec. 1566.

[38] Ibid., 3: 59–62. Reports of Megen's negotiations in Osnabruck, Nov. 1566.

[39] EA 282, fo. 382. Courteville's report to Margaret on arms purchases in Tournai and Valenciennes by the Calvinists, 7 Nov. 1566. The arms dealer came from Cologne.

she had granted by the Accord, had been voided by the excesses that had followed. With a legal prohibition of sermons as a foundation and with the encouragement of Mansfeld and the Council of State, she prepared to act. Implementing the policy became an increasingly dangerous business, but she saw no other choice. On one hand, the Calvinists armed in the cities, and on the other, Philip had ordered levies in the German provinces, as did some of the Confederates. The immediate expenses heightened the dangers to the regime as she organized the payment of German troops, depleting funds to pay her own soldiers.

Even as she began to act against them, Margaret had to deal with the petitions of the confident Calvinists. They continued to sponsor change, what she called sedition and mutiny, in as-yet unconverted areas, and they wanted to secure their previous victories. The Calvinists of Antwerp, Tournai, and Valenciennes petitioned for legal status. They asked the court to affirm to the changes they had forced on religion and they offered a fortune in gold to Margaret and the king in exchange for freedom of religion.

> And to make it clearly understood that the privilege of liberty and the free exercise of their religion . . . increases their desire to dedicate and consecrate themselves and their goods to your service, they offer, from the day of the concession of grace and the promise of security, to raise, beyond the amount of ordinary taxes and contributions, the sum of three million florins to be furnished in a reasonable time to free Your Majesty's domains of all encumbrances.[40]

The unexpected offer truly stunned Margaret because it showed how the Calvinists underestimated and misunderstood their opponents. To her, only impudent and dishonest people would make such an offer and it heightened her desire to subjugate their leaders. She wanted to act quickly because the forces arrayed against her grew each day.

> There is also a great multitude which demands nothing less than mutation and change in everything, making every effort to accomplish this before the arrival of Your Majesty, as can be easily understood considering that their bad consciences make them dread your coming and thus emboldens them to make a desperate effort to achieve everything.[41]

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[40] Pasquier de le Barre, *The Time of Troubles in the Low Countries: The Chronicles and Memoirs of Pasquier de le Barre of Tournai, 1559–1567*, C. Steen tr., (New York: 1989) 187.

[41] *Correspondance française*, 1: 201. Margaret to Philip, 13 Nov. 1566; G. Parker, *Dutch Revolt* (London: 1977), 93–95.

Margaret and the Council of State prepared a memorandum that listed each major city and province where Calvinist activity dominated and they evaluated the situation, summarizing action that she had already initiated. In Antwerp the magistrates made some efforts to contain Calvinist violence, hanging six men who organized an attack on the cathedral tower, possibly as a first step toward a major riot. Similar efforts had begun in other cities, even in Tournai. On the other hand, the magistrates in both places proved incapable of stopping the convocation of synods and consistories designed to unite the efforts of the Calvinists of various cities. In some places, such as Bois-le-Duc, which she regarded as hard-headed and difficult in the best of times, Margaret actually wondered if any Catholics remained.

Whenever she saw an opportunity, she moved quickly. In Lières, the *escoutte*, the leading magistrate, flaunted his Calvinism and resisted the efforts of a counselor from Brabant to introduce troops to secure order. Margaret saw an advantage in the split in the ranks of the magistrates and acted when the *escoutte* organized a protest that drove the counselor from Lières. She immediately ordered the magistrates to Brussels and commanded them to accept a garrison. They told her they would do what they could, but actually went to Antwerp to seek advice. In response, Margaret ordered four companies from Vilvorde to Lières, where they demanded entry into the city on pain of it being declared rebellious. If the city accepted, two companies would enter, but if it refused, four would attack it. The city capitulated without incident and the leaders of the Calvinist faction fled to Antwerp, where they stirred up a protest that came close to revolt. The Calvinists demanded immediate action, but the magistrates declined the invitation to rebellion, promising only to resist any effort to garrison Antwerp.[42]

3. *Counter-Attack*

Immediately on the heels of her success in Lières, Margaret became more aggressive. Her choice of words changed, reverting to the abusive terminology she had utilized prior to the insurrection. In addition, Margaret lost patience with Catholics who did not stand up to the Calvinists. At best she regarded them as pusillanimous, an accusation she leveled at

[42] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 1: 246–274. As Margaret put pressure on Tournai, the Calvinists and the magistrates increasingly watched to see how Antwerp responded to similar situations.

the Catholics of Maastricht when a plan she and the Bishop of Liège concocted to put troops into the city failed, leaving the Calvinists in control of several churches. The loss did not cause her to pause, for she admitted that she employed no certain method in Brabant and Flanders, but took advantage of circumstances in each situation. Sometimes she acted by modifying agreements based on the Accord. Thus Egmont managed to reduce the number of places where Calvinists could present sermons in Flanders from around eighty to fewer than sixty. He did this on the basis of the Accord, admitting that much resulted from persuasion and not firm and permanent agreements. In other places, Margaret refused to even mention the Accord, relying instead on force and law. In those cases, a local party favorable to royal interests had to be present, and she asked the members of the Council of Flanders to assist in that task. Although they had never been friendly toward the demands of the Spanish regime, the insurrection and the continuation of large assemblies greatly disturbed the council, and its members responded positively to her.[43]

Margaret knew that the success of each venture depended on the decisiveness of its initial act. In Alost, the magistrates arrested a preacher who had been called there by some of the citizens. With the assistance of fifty troops that Egmont dispatched from Ghent, they strangled him publicly. In the absence of great hue and cry over that deed, the magistrates determined to proceed against those who had called him to Alost. Margaret also supported firm action in Furnes, where she mocked the threats of the Calvinists to bring in fifteen thousand men. She claimed they did not even have a leader and dealt with the situation through a minor figure at court who sharply curtailed sermons.[44]

In the north, news remained mixed. Megen's efforts to raise some troops and to encourage divisions in towns that harbored preachers enjoyed modest success. He welcomed the religious divisions that plagued the Protestant cause, forecasting strife between the small group of Lutherans and the much larger group of Calvinists, and hoping that Catholics would seize the opportunity to rally to the government. Failure in any of his enterprises would embolden all Calvinists, hence he had to move carefully, planning each step to avoid confrontation, hiring only Flemish troops, and never associating himself with Brussels or the Spanish regime if he could

[43] *Correspondance française*, 1: 209–215. Margaret to Philip, 18 Nov. 1566.
[44] Ibid., 1: 212.

avoid it.[45] His success in Gelderland would, she hoped, facilitate Aremberg's efforts to contain Calvinism in Frisia and Groningen. Aremberg's reports expressed deep gloom, for food shortages and an outbreak of the plague accompanied religious disruption. Leeuwarden decided to continue to do as it pleased, but the contest would change instantly if Megen succeeded in his enterprises and could assist.[46] Aremberg recognized the difficulties arising from challenges to authority, especially after a group of Frisian aristocrats presented him with a petition seeking affirmation of changes in religion. The petition requested local independence in law and religious choice. The reformers in Groningen wanted the magistrates to direct a complete reordering of life in accord with scripture, a plan reminiscent of the efforts of Huldrich Zwingli in Zurich a generation before. Thus Aremberg regarded them as "Zwinglians." and reported that they had already established a rigid order for sermons: at dawn for servants; during the morning for masters; and after dinner for everyone else. In the village of Sneek trouble developed when some people surreptitiously brought in a Calvinist preacher who boldly challenged the priest in the church and assumed control of the congregation.[47]

For Margaret all such problems had to await the outcome of initial moves in Flanders and Tournai. The situation in Tournai and Valenciennes put her policy to its severest test. The Lord of Noircarmes represented her at Valenciennes, where he tried to negotiate while also keeping a substantial force near the walled city. In Tournai, Margaret negotiated through the secretary of the Privy Council, Gauchos de la Torre, an open adversary of the Calvinists. Margaret gave him specific orders to reduce Calvinist activity and to force the city to reestablish order. The presence of the citadel, which could receive reinforcements from the countryside, allowed boldness. In a growing contest of wills, Margaret dissimulated on every Calvinist demand and actually undertook the piecemeal destruction of the agreement Hoorn had forged in his pacification efforts. The count became enraged and the Calvinists infuriated, even threatening the safety of the Catholics. Standing firm, Margaret ordered Moulbais, the governor of the citadel, to use all his forces against Tournai, including artillery, should the Calvinists attack. To her the city seemed an ideal test of the resolve

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[45] *Briefwisseling*, 314–333. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 5–29 Nov. 1566.

[46] *Correspondance française*, 3: 87–93. Aremberg to Margaret and report of the negotiations of the Council of Frisia, 27–29 Nov. 1566.

[47] Ibid., 3: 93–99. Letters of Margaret and Aremberg with supporting documents, 1–7 Dec. 1566.

of the Calvinists and of the independent-minded members of the Golden Fleece. Success against Tournai and Valenciennes would give her leverage against Antwerp and Amsterdam. Failure would allow her to reconsider her policy without great danger of provoking a civil war. She easily won the contest with Hoorn, whose opposition in the council came to nothing and resulted in his withdrawing to his estates. Others, especially Orange, did not leave their posts. Orange pacified Utrecht and moved on to Delft and Amsterdam while she continued to rely on Megen in Gelderland and Aremberg in Frisia to at least contain religious problems.[48]

To assist the cause, Mansfeld raised two thousand cavalry, but could no longer afford to pay them. Without Philip's aid, Margaret feared that the mercenaries would gravitate to the other side, which offered more certain pay.[49] For his part, Philip hated to fund the troops because he feared that they might be tainted with heresy. Although he did send money, he insisted that commissioners administer an oath committing the soldiers to the Catholic religion before they received any pay. He did authorize raising fifteen companies to be distributed to Megen, Aremberg, and Orange, although he did not hide his suspicion of the prince, wanting the troops committed to him to have only captains who would respond to royal orders in the event Orange misused them.[50] However, such levies meant little to Philip, who informed Margaret at the end of November that he would journey to the provinces the following spring at the head of a large force.

> God knows how much I desire to see affairs in such a state that, for the protection of the good, the security of the provinces, and the rectification of affairs, I would not need to go there accompanied by more than my ordinary court and that is easy to believe even if there were no other consideration other than that of expense. But seeing the paucity of security which exists and the rumors that evildoers spread about foreigners becoming involved, I have been unable to arrive at any resolution . . . other than to go accompanied as is necessary, principally in order to find a way to avoid war, being most certain that the way to that end is to go there so well accompanied that the bad would never hope to be able to match my forces, rather than going with a small or middling company that they might think, as rumor claims, of equaling with forces they could put together. And it is not my intention to treat the lands, nor my vassals and subjects other than as their good and clement prince, nor to ruin them, put them in servitude, which I

[48] *Correspondance française*, 1: 212–214; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 1: 240–282.
[49] Iongh, *Madama*, 327–340.
[50] *Correspondance française*, 1: 218–221. Philip to Margaret, 27 Nov. 1566.

> hear some contend in order to remove them from the affection, love and loyalty which they owe to and have always demonstrated toward their natural princes. For I do not wish to proceed if not with all humanity, kindness and grace, avoiding as much as possible all bitterness; . . . but my intention is to defend and maintain them against all invasions, forces and violence, as much without as within, to reprimand the audacity of disturbers of the public repose, to procure the obedience that is my due according to God and law, and to rectify and restore things to their proper order.[51]

Philip said that he had to think of the whole of his charge and not just of the feeling of particular provinces. Hence he did not feel compelled to request the advice of any councils or estates and he disregarded without comment all of Margaret's proposals. Nor did he remark on the pacification program except to congratulate her diligence. He only wanted her to announce his coming visit and to warn everyone to come to their senses and "live accordingly" until he arrived.[52] Nothing in his letter allayed growing apprehension about his motives.

While the money for troops helped, Philip's words did not. His dispatch arrived at the start of her program to restore order and it had a chilling effect on Margaret. Yet she could not stop her offensive against the Calvinists, having carefully weighed and considered the policy in the Council of State, balancing persuasion with force and using with remarkable results the same legalistic techniques that previously had been the exclusive preserve of the Calvinists. In the cities where the Confederates had introduced the Accord as the basis for Calvinist activity, Margaret ordered strict compliance with it. Preachers could offer sermons, but the Accord tolerated no other rites. She sought:

> The means whereby I can prevent all practices of the aforesaid sects, that is baptism, marriage, burial rites, synods, consistories, collection of contributions, distribution of alms, schooling, conferences, distribution of messages that Calvinists have carried over here, along with the sale of infamous, heretical and seditious books.[53]

Margaret's admonition reaffirmed what she considered to be the public good, placing officials of the provinces in proper control of affairs and establishing harmonious and essentially beneficial relationships among all their subjects. Calvinist consistories invaded established public authority, their schools directed youths along very different paths, and their collection

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[51] Ibid., 3: 68. Philip to Margaret, 27 Nov. 1566.
[52] Ibid., 3: 68–70. Philip to Margaret, 27 Nov. 1566.
[53] Ibid., 1: 221. Margaret to Philip, 18 Dec. 1566.

of revenue resembled mere pillage because it occurred without public authority. When combined with the absolute Calvinist renunciation of the Catholic Church, the new religion had a wholly seditious effect. Margaret raised the issues as a summary of the insurrection's consequences and to emphasize potential losses should the Calvinist assault remain unchecked. She issued the letters to both "good" and "bad" towns and Megen congratulated her for taking action. He remained poised, ready for an assault on Bois-le-Duc while also sending a force into Harderwijk, where the magistrates aided his cause.[54]

Her forces remained meager and faced untried Calvinist recruits of unknown number. Some cities where the Calvinists already exercised control responded with derision. In most provinces and cities, the admonition to act had mixed results. What magistrates would have regarded as another effort to extend the control of Madrid and Brussels just a few months before appeared in a different light in December 1566. Philip II's regime still appalled citizens who supported the ways of the past, but the Calvinist assault had injected equally distasteful political and religious opinions into public life. Margaret relied on converting many old adversaries of the king to the cause of justice and order simply because of the success of Calvinism. Her approach had a bold, even brazen character in the face of confident and seemingly powerful Calvinists. Some of them approached her personally, intercepting her after church services to present a petition calling for full religious freedom. She also had to turn away nobles from Gelderland and Zutphen who came to her with a demand that their provincial estates be called so that they could discuss religion. While she easily claimed that no estates had ever addressed such a subject, she found it hard to resist demands from people who could start a rebellion at will. Margaret never masked her fears for her personal safety, but showed remarkable courage in confronting the problems directly.[55]

The battle waged in the provinces became more daring. If the Calvinists had proven capable of mustering even a fraction of the force they bragged about having, then the meager units she had in the field would have faced complete destruction. Yet she had to make the attempt and after lengthy discussions in the Council of State, the Lord of Noircarmes received final orders to move against Valenciennes. Although Noircarmes had too much

[54] *Briefwisseling*, 341–351. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 9–22 Dec. 1566, and Cuypers, *Documents . . . Bois-le-Duc*, 121.

[55] *Correspondance française*, 1: 221–230. Margaret to Philip, 18 Dec. 1566.

confidence, feeling that the city would collapse immediately, which it did not, the venture proved that the Calvinists had exaggerated their strength. Their forces, while large, had enrolled volunteers whose zeal for the new faith far exceeded their training as soldiers. Margaret ordered Valenciennes to accept a garrison and the magistrates began to bargain with her. The Confederates reemerged as participants along with the preachers, making the discussions acrimonious. Noircarmes became eager to attack the city after only brief meetings with its leaders, both new and old, but Margaret insisted on moving slowly, waiting to see how the Calvinist forces would reveal themselves. She discovered that neither side could triumph. The numerous Calvinists were short on military skills, but Noircarmes, optimistic and eager, lacked forces sufficient even to blockade the city. An attack might succeed but it would lack the precision provided by a larger force, and Margaret feared that in the frenzy of the moment the soldiers would sack and ruin the city, disregarding her objectives. The magistrates, badly divided along religious lines, feared both sides. They dared not either proclaim Margaret's orders on religious observance or forward Calvinist demands to Brussels.[56]

In mid-December, Noircarmes established a loose line of force in the villages around the city and both he and the regent continued to send the magistrates threatening messages. He did skirmish with one detachment, which brought two thousand Calvinists out of the city, leaving some dead. That excited more negotiations and the magistrates became open in expressing their fear of what the soldiers might do. They also claimed that Margaret had ordered the encounter without proper discussion in the Council of State. She denounced their impertinence, reminding them of her charge from Philip to govern the Netherlands. Negotiations had to rest on mutual respect and trust, and she chose to challenge the intentions of Valenciennes. The magistrates did indeed break off the talks, refused a garrison, and claimed that they would raise their own troops to ward off any foreigners, including her forces. With divisions clear, Margaret knew that what happened there would be a model for events in other cities in Flanders and also in Brabant, Gelderland, and Holland.[57]

The test of wills in Valenciennes gripped the attention of the cities where the Calvinist insurrection had triumphed. Meetings in Tournai and

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[56] Ibid., 3: 99–102. Letters of Margaret, Noircarmes and the magistrates of Valenciennes, 2–10 Dec. 1566; P. Le Boucq, *Troubles advenues à Valenciennes* (Brussels: 1864), 19–20; C. Paillard, *Huit mois dans la vie d'un peuple* (Brussels: 1877).

[57] *Correspondance française*, 1: 225. Margaret to Philip, 18 Dec. 1566.

Antwerp verged on insurrection. Hoogstraten wrote from Antwerp that power had shifted into the hands of Calvinists, whose leaders alone preserved order and prevented a massacre of Catholics. Confederates also gathered there and Hoogstraten even encountered Louis of Nassau, who lightheartedly claimed to be in Antwerp only to take in the sights. However, Hoogstraten also hastened to Malines to halt the efforts of Catholics who sought to arm and drive the "sectarians" from their midst. He told them to abide by the Accord in the interests of preserving Margaret's authority.[58] Other places in Flanders experienced turmoil. Egmont wrote that his visits showed the province drifting closer than ever to war. Peasants and townspeople gathered near Tournai to arm and train in order to attack Noircarmes at Valenciennes. In response, Margaret banned arming and going to Valenciennes, threatening the life and property of anyone who ventured toward that city, which she declared to be disobedient. Orange refused to issue her missive on Valenciennes in Amsterdam for fear of instigating disorder, and other governors seemed slow to respond. Margaret admitted the dangers of making remonstrances and prohibitions with limited force, but she never intended to subjugate the people but only to pacify the land to prepare for Philip's arrival. Margaret did pass on to the king rumors about his intentions: "Those opposing your coming have spread a rumor that Your Majesty is coming with large foreign forces as if he wished to put the whole land, both good and bad, in permanent servitude by virtually conquering anew the provinces."[59]

She labeled these as false rumors but noted that Philip never repudiated them, and she dreaded the possible accuracy of the popular view. One anonymous Calvinist account claimed that the king and councils:

> . . . proclaimed throughout the Netherlands the power to kill and massacre the breakers of images, and that those who killed them would be pardoned by His Majesty without need of any other letters of grace. He thus lightly and with perverse zeal decreed . . . (against divine and human law) permission and consent to the killing and cutting down of the poor living images of God for having pulled down dead images made by the hand of men to adore and honor contrary, they say, to the commandments of God the creator.[60]

There was also the great danger posed by Antwerp, where she thought the fabric of life had come totally apart, leading to open political speculation

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[58] Ibid., 3: 107–109. Hoogstraten to Margaret, 6 Dec. 1566.
[59] Ibid., 1: 229.
[60] Ibid., 1: 226–229. Margaret to Philip, 18 Dec. 1566, and *Mémoires anonymes sur les troubles des Pays Bas*, J. Blaes ed. (Brussels: 1859), 1: 17.

and debate. Lutherans had come to the town to try to win the Calvinists to their doctrine or at least to reach a concord; the Anabaptists continued to grow more active; and preachers of every other persuasion found the city attractive. In Tournai, where the Calvinists became more unruly and violent each day, Margaret dealt bluntly with the magistrates, making it clear that the city's refusal to abide by new rules established by De la Torre and to receive a garrison rendered it disobedient. Unlike the equally obstreperous Valenciennes, the citadel made Tournai vulnerable to attack. Yet she remained cautious, for her counterattack had occasioned the meeting of the Confederates in Antwerp, and she feared that the aristocrats gathered there would take to the field to lead the Calvinists.

Rassenghien reported that the Calvinists armed people in the villages near Lille, "taxing" each parish a set number of men, equipping them and dispatching the force to Tournai.[61] She had to move cautiously, using few troops both from necessity and from policy, fearing that a large force would provoke an immediate reaction, while no use of force at all would give her opponents courage. The petitions of the Calvinists gave her an indication of what lay down that path, for they debated her every move, crafting unique interpretations of each rule and remonstrance that favored their cause. Law simply became a reflection of their plans and attitudes. Margaret answered wherever possible by influencing magistrates and trying to unseat any who had converted to Calvinism. She also began the process of separating aristocrats and soldiers in her forces into those who would obey her orders and those who favored the Confederates. Margaret knew of the danger of civil war as she commenced her campaign and she wanted those in her service to make a commitment. Although her hopes often met with icy indifference from men such as Orange, she did not hesitate to make distinctions clear.[62]

In the midst of these maneuvers, Margaret received word from Tournai that forced her hand. The Calvinists had finished arming and had begun moving toward the relief of Valenciennes, sacking churches and plundering the country homes of non-Calvinist aristocrats as they went. Rassenghien reported flocks of people coming to join the force as it moved through the Tournaisis toward West Flanders. Disorders in the small towns of the area accompanied their movement. He proposed that the battle be

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[61] *Correspondance française*, 3: 103–105. Rassenghien to Margaret, 2 and 11 Dec. 1566.

[62] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 297–301. Letters of Margaret to William, 23 December 1566.

joined immediately to prevent the army of vagabonds and rabble, as he regarded them, from utterly ruining the area. Margaret completely agreed and quickly ordered Noircarmes to move from Valenciennes to command the enterprise. All attention focused on Tournai and the force created in the nearby fields and forests. She dispatched every available unit to deal with it, bringing together most of the captains to whom she had entrusted the task of using force to restore order.[63] Valenciennes had to wait, for the center of the contest had shifted to the forests and small towns between that city and Tournai.

[63] EA 282, fo. 384–394. Letters of Rassenghien and Margaret, 26–28 Dec. 1566; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 5–13.

CHAPTER EIGHT

UNEASY VICTORY

1. *Capturing Tournai*

The furious conflicts plaguing Flanders and the Tournaisis at the close of 1566 threatened to spawn a civil war. In the village of Pernes, armed Catholics broke up a Calvinist sermon only to be routed a short time later when their adversaries returned with a much larger force. The confrontation quickly became a part of a general arming, and the Calvinists seemed to have the upper hand in numbers and weapons. The Viscount of Ghent complained to Margaret that the local lords began to "act like little kings" as they put themselves at the head of Calvinist units.[1] Sermons came to be celebrated with songs and gunshots, underscoring the lawlessness of the episodes. In Ypres, the magistrates demanded that Margaret decide whether they should abide by the Accord reached by Egmont, or join the efforts to suppress Calvinism. The Calvinists planned synods to complete their organization, thus making the matter urgent. She had to temporize, for the results of her decision to attack Tournai and Valenciennes would determine what would happen elsewhere.[2] Full confrontation with Calvinists was possible only when troops gave her the advantage. Force alone would "reintegrate" royal authority into government affairs; in its absence she and her governors had to wait.[3]

Attacking the Calvinists near Tournai put everything at risk. She had only vague information and the reported size of their force grew as the distance from it increased. On the other hand, she also had evidence of growing reaction against Calvinist demands even in Tournai, a place high on her list of "bad" cities. There a royal citadel loomed over the Escaut River and its ramparts dominated the entire city, offering the garrison a clear line of fire down many streets. Moulbais, its governor, remained a firm supporter of the regime and an adamant opponent of the new religion.

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[1] *Correspondance française*, 3: 121–125. Report from Pernes and from the Viscount of Ghent, 17–18 Dec. 1566; EA 244.2, reports and letters, Dec. 1566.

[2] *Correspondance française*, 3: 126–140. Letters of Margaret and the Viscount of Ghent and report of the magistrates of Ghent, 22–30 Dec. 1566.

[3] EA 292, fo. 420. Margaret to Aremberg, 22 Dec. 1566.

During the Calvinist insurrection Moulbais had repeatedly expressed his desire to strike down the iconoclasts, but they far outnumbered his tiny garrison. In the following months, Margaret enhanced the independence of the citadel, thus alienating her from Count Hoorn, who wanted to control it as part of the effort to pacify Tournai.

Within the city, Catholics remained cowed but resilient in the face of what one called Satan's servants.[4] While loyalists such as the chronicler Nicholas Soldoyer confined their fury to paper, their anger showed the effects of Calvinist aggression and the divisions within the city. The magistrate Pasquier de le Barre, a moderate, regarded Calvinism as the future and accepted civil and religious change.[5] Each challenge expanded the control of the new religion. Iconoclasm had effectively closed Catholic churches and the Calvinists demanded the right to open their own temples to replace them, confidently assuming that everyone would thereafter attend their services. Hoorn, to Le Barre's relief and Soldoyer's fury, acceded to their demands and construction began. The Calvinists could not resist the opportunity to make a statement, and they used smashed statues of saints and other broken images for the foundations of the temple. Rumors and fears frequently swept the city; mob behavior and the threat of violence eroded public and economic life. From the citadel, Moulbais blustered, challenging the new order with his meager garrison.[6] Margaret got some satisfaction from division between the Calvinist organization and the magistrates, many of whom had joined the new faith but who had no desire to see Tournai become a new Geneva. They had allowed the conversion of two huge warehouses into Calvinist temples, but the threat of a confrontation with the citadel caused many to pause. Thus the angry youths who gathered on the quays to shout insults at the soldiers of the citadel acted at the behest of the preachers and not the magistrates. Later, when an exchange of shots took place between soldiers and Calvinists, the official city militia did not respond to the sounding of the alarm bell.[7]

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[4] Nicholas Soldoyer, *Mémoires de Pasquier de le Barre et de Nicholas Soldoyer*, A. Pinchart ed., 2 vols. (Brussels: 1859–1865), 2: 246–256.

[5] Pasquier de le Barre, *The Time of Troubles in the Low Countries: The Chronicles and Memoirs of Pasquier de le Barre of Tournai, 1559–1567*, C. Steen tr. (New York: 1989), 193–203; EA 244.5, pieces 26–28 and 31–36. Letters of Margaret and officers in Tournai, 1–20 Dec. 1566.

[6] *BCRH*, 12: 98–99. Ordinances of Tournai, 28 Nov. 1566.

[7] EA 244.5, piece 24. Letters of Margaret and Moulbais, Dec. 1566; *BCRH*, 11, part 2: 427–428, Register of the Council of Tournai, 15 Dec. 1566.

Margaret's new boldness hastened the creation of a Calvinist force in the countryside. Hundreds of the faithful gathered near Tournai, occupying the villages and organizing armed companies, and the city furnished the growing army with weapons and foodstuffs.[8] The volunteers tried to finish the iconoclasm started the previous summer, attacking monasteries and demolishing village churches. Margaret knew the dangers posed to the Catholics in Tournai, who became desolate as the Calvinists became more brazen. Shops remained open on Christmas Day and those who dared to attend traditional services suffered verbal abuse. Thus Margaret risked everything when she initiated her policy in Tournai. Using Moulbais as a surrogate, she ordered the magistrates to limit Calvinist activity. She did not expect them to experience sudden enthusiasm for their old faith, but they had to reaffirm legal boundaries that had collapsed in the face of disobedience and irreverence. Calvinists had not acted through legal means and certainly did not have the consent of the king, which rendered their seizure of authority seditious, particularly when their consistories began to collect taxes and to distribute funds at their own discretion. Ordered to suppress such behavior directly and without "fraud, connivance or dissimulation," the uncomfortable and embarrassed magistrates did nothing.[9]

Calvinists did not shrink from the challenge and provoked a confrontation by arresting, with Confederate help, one of the provost's men, threatening to put him on trial for treason in their own court. The terrified magistrates ended the crisis only when they agreed to try the man themselves.[10] In addition, their assault continued unabated in rural areas. If villagers cooperated and actually did the work of demolishing their churches, the Calvinists permitted them to keep the building and only images and belfries had to be ruined or torn down. If the villagers appeared recalcitrant, they faced the burning of their church and the pillaging of their homes. Margaret saw some hope as incidents in which local Catholics banded together to stop Calvinist assaults increased. When a group of semi-organized Calvinists sallied forth from Valenciennes intent on ruining the monastery of St. Saulve, the monks and peasants joined together to fight back, driving the iconoclasts away and inflicting casualties on them.[11]

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[8] Le Barre and Soldoyer, *Mémoires*, 2: 7–12 and 253–256.
[9] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 1: 345–350.
[10] Ibid., 2: 14.
[11] *Correspondance française*, 3: 129–130. Noircarmes to Margaret, 24 Dec. 1566.

Nevertheless, the Calvinist force remained the key issue, although its quality was unknown. The preacher Cornille urged the men on with promises that all Catholic worship would end and that they would sleep in the bishop's palace and other fine ecclesiastical buildings. According to informants, Cornille also promised to pay the men and to name their true leader once they controlled Tournai and Valenciennes. The preacher intimated that a great lord actually commanded them, a possibility Margaret dreaded as one that would put the finishing touches on the outbreak of civil war and a Calvinist challenge to all authority not of their own creation. Thus a note of urgency marked her orders to Noircarmes to deal with the problem in the Tournaisis, where he had explicit powers that no one could challenge.[12] Noircarmes swiftly started his pursuit of the Calvinist force, which he regarded as a motley band of rabble. Despite having confidence in his own professional soldiers, Noircarmes ventured out without firm knowledge about the size and quality of the forces he sought to fight. Others had to act with similar courage. Moulbais called Tournai's magistrates before him and virtually broke relations with them because they had not acted to prevent the Calvinists from obtaining arms. He then put the citadel on a war footing, a bold act given the small force under his command.[13]

Likewise, Rassenghien left Lille to counter the Calvinist army, trying to force them back toward Tournai and Noircarmes's slightly larger force. He had so few men that he had to rely on villagers to help him. The encounter delighted Margaret and she enjoined Noircarmes to act quickly, adding that when he had smashed the Calvinist army, he should immediately proceed to take care of the "rabble" of Tournai.[14] Her plan enjoyed a startling success. As Noircarmes moved toward Tournai, Rassenghien trapped a group of Calvinists at the village of Waterloo, where the professional soldiers slaughtered many of the untrained faithful, while others fled and took refuge in a church they had ruined. There Rassenghien and his men killed two hundred of them while losing only two of their own.[15]

Rassenghien and Noircarmes together then sought out what they knew to be the largest of the Calvinist groups, a force commanded by the Tournaisian Jean Soreau. However, the once aggressive Calvinists who had sacked and pillaged their way through the Tournaisis suddenly took flight,

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[12] Ibid., 3: 132. Margaret to Noircarmes, 25 Dec. 1566.
[13] *BCRH*, 11, part 2: 429. Register of the Council of Tournai, 26 Dec. 1566.
[14] EA 353, fo. 137. Letters of Margaret and Rassenghien, 27 Dec. 1566.
[15] *Correspondance française*, 3: 132–3. Rassenghien to Margaret, 27 Dec. 1566.

panicked by news from Waterloo. When the Calvinists appeared before the tiny town of Lannoy, its magistrates closed the gates, allowing Noircarmes to trap them under the town walls. The battle devastated the Calvinists. Few survived to scatter across the frozen countryside, fearing angry villagers as much as pursuit by Noircarmes. Catholics in Tournai rejoiced that Calvinist camps had become their graveyards. All other units attached to the Calvinist cause in the region simply evaporated. Even though many Calvinists remained safe in the cities of the area, the crushing defeat had robbed them of the psychological advantage they had enjoyed.[16]

The victory allowed Margaret to fully implement her policy of restoration. She never regarded the encounter in the countryside as addressing the heart of the problem in the cities. The intention was to battle Calvinism where it had emerged, and Tournai suddenly became a prime opportunity for putting her plans into effect. Margaret had already given Noircarmes an instruction for dealing with Tournai. Pinning her hopes on an easy victory, she ordered him to march his troops quickly to Tournai after battling the Calvinists so that they would arrive along with news of the defeat. She wanted Noircarmes to enter the citadel secretly if possible and then immediately summon the magistrates and demand their acceptance of a garrison on pain of having the soldiers sack the place and kill the inhabitants. He could assure the magistrates that the garrison would not infringe on the Accord, but could allow them no opportunity to debate with him. Privately, Margaret told him to shed as little blood as possible if he had to attack, but to intimidate the magistrates by forcing them to accept or reject his offer within two hours.[17]

Noircarmes carried out Margaret's orders with precision. After a forced nighttime march the soldiers entered the citadel at mid-day on 2 January 1567. They appeared tired but triumphant and eager to attack the city, for its plunder would be their pay. The Calvinists, stunned by the defeat of a force whose godly mission had come to such a sorry end, suddenly faced the very soldiers who had killed their brethren. The dangerous moment filled the magistrates with dismay. They no longer had the political luxury of debating with the regent. The garrison Noircarmes imposed would take

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[16] Le Barre and Soldoyer, *Mémoires*, 2: 14–16 and 255–256; G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere dal Giovan Battista Guicciardini al Cosimo e Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1577*, Battistine ed. (Brussels-Rome: 1949) 282–283; C. Steen, *A Chronicle of Conflict: Tournai, 1559–1567* (Utrecht: 1985), 113–120.

[17] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 24–26. Letter of Margaret to the magistrates, Dec. 1566; EA 353, fo. 126. Margaret to Noircarmes, Dec. 1566.

no orders from them. They quickly capitulated as debate and anger swirled in the streets where ardent Calvinists, who wanted to die defending the city rather than await their turn with the public executioner, found few followers. The chronicler Soldoyer witnessed with delight the flight of the Calvinist leadership. In his account, one preacher, Étienne Marmier, gave a sermon that suddenly counseled peace, after which his wife found him a fine horse and he fled through an angry crowd of his followers.[18] As he made his inelegant departure, the soldiers marched in from the citadel, angry at the lost opportunity for plunder. The Calvinist adventure in Tournai had ended. Leading citizens of both religious camps met with the magistrates to find food for the soldiers, astonishing the poor with their largess after weeks when want had afflicted the city.

For Margaret, this was a moment of great opportunity. She wanted to reorganize Tournai as the first step of a plan to present the king with a land brought back to peace without being robbed of its essential prosperity. Her method involved confronting both magistrates and Calvinists, subduing the former and crushing the latter. She had no illusions about the role the magistrates had played in allowing what she regarded as the Calvinist misery to sweep across the land. Thus, in those cities she deemed "bad," Margaret had no intention of restoring the magistrates to their former power, but needed the king to move quickly to support her policy, for she could not sustain the state as it was.

> For, however many troops I raise, I cannot see to everything, since however much effort I make to remedy problems in one place, new troubles will emerge in two other locations because of our enemies and those who adopt their cause . . . from hatred of religion and of Your Majesty and from their wish to sack and pillage the good and wealthy of the land; and, although I see, know, and understand more, I am not able to undertake their chastisement or correction, or scarcely to discuss it. And they wish to be regarded, they claim, as servants of Your Majesty who would die at your feet, in all of which I see double treason.[19]

She still feared the Confederates and the newly aggressive commoners. Increasingly hostile to the intrusion of the commoners into public business, she saw this as an opportunity to limit their influence. In her view, the events leading up to the battle near Lannoy had been a form of popular riot, which she had suppressed. However, she continued to see treason

[18] Soldoyer, *Mémoires*, 2: 255–258.
[19] Ibid., 1: 247–249.

everywhere as people swore to do their duty to faith and king and then continued to do precisely as they wished. Even as Tournai capitulated, the regime faced new threats. The council meetings that discussed the dismantling of the Calvinist organization in Tournai also heard warnings that a force would come to Brussels to sack its churches and impose the will of the new religion. Then George Johann of the Palatinate unexpectedly arrived at court, unnerving Margaret since rumor named him as the person chosen to head a Calvinist army. When he requested an audience, she had to be urged on by the council before she would agree. She confronted the prince with accusations that he wished to meddle in the affairs of the Netherlands. He denied the charge, but then subjected her to a short harangue based on the injunction of the evangelist not to obstruct the work of God.[20]

The presence at court of such a vicious man, as she put it, only gave courage to the Confederates, who ignored the defeat at Tournai and continued to advance their own position wherever they could. Some had armed men to protect assemblies from attack, but they had never tried to join forces with Calvinists near Tournai or Valenciennes. Thus lack of unity combined with an inability to comprehend what was happening. Their behavior enabled Margaret to attack the towns one by one. Commenting on the victory at Lannoy, Margaret expressed her regret at the misery the engagement inflicted, but noted how the people had forgotten their duty and engaged in acts of rebellion toward the king, the church, and all good subjects.[21] Members of the Fleece also continued to act in an arbitrary and self-centered fashion. Hoogstraten troubled her when he attended a session of the Council of State without being summoned. He professed to want to discuss events in Antwerp, where he was supposed to represent Margaret, but he actually came to criticize Noircarmes for his independent military exploits. Knowing that it was her policy being questioned, Margaret rebuffed him. Hoogstraten then threatened to withdraw from Antwerp because fulfilling his office cost him too much money. Margaret had to summon him to a formal audience to remind him that his ancestors had enriched themselves with public service, hence some personal expenses on his part seemed in order. She told him to return to Antwerp and furnished him with express orders to diminish Calvinist

[20] *Correspondance française*, 1: 245–9. Letters of Margaret to Philip, 3 Jan. 1567.

[21] *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciture, Prince d'Orange*, L.P. Gachard ed. 6 vols. (Brussels: 1847–1866), 2: 234. Margaret to William, 16 Jan. 1567.

influence and favor the Catholic cause. He agreed and the crisis passed, but it reminded Margaret of the precarious nature of her government.[22]

Needing all possible support, she asked Philip to allow Berghes and Montigny to return to assist in efforts to reduce towns. By the time her letter reached Spain, Philip had initiated his own policy with respect to the Netherlands and he made those two lords his first victims, blaming them for crimes committed in the provinces under their charge. Margaret trusted the two more than any others and felt that she could confide in them. They had provided moderate voices in government, and without them the Council of State became more divided, with Mansfeld declaring that even members of the Golden Fleece should take an oath to church and king.[23] Nevertheless, Margaret proceeded to implement a pacification plan in Tournai. Her carefully reasoned plan made it the model for all subsequent efforts. The initial rules had reassured the Calvinists that the garrison would not interfere with them provided they abided by the Accord. Subsequent regulations disarmed all citizens, reestablished Catholic worship, imposed a strict curfew, and expelled all foreigners.[24] Immediately thereafter Noircarmes disbanded the city watch, seized Tournai's munitions and artillery, and took the keys to the gates. All subjects faced equal treatment since Margaret had no notion of which citizens had remained faithful; no individual could claim immunity from scrutiny.[25] The power of local privilege suddenly disappeared. Inquisitorial tactics, searching houses without warrant, and detaining individuals without charge, previously the stuff of controversy, became commonplace.

A semblance of normal life returned. Only then did Margaret undertake the punishment of those involved in the insurrection, challenging those in public life who had permitted the audacity of the Calvinists. The laws and practices in Tournai that insulated the city in judicial and religious matters vanished and military independence also became a thing of the past. To their dismay, the remaining Catholic magistrates also had to turn in personal swords and daggers. To make sure that the orders to disarm the city had been effective, Noircarmes ordered a house-by-house search, a shocking event to residents who had never before suffered such an intrusion. While all seemed amazed by the abrupt transfer of authority, the

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[22] *Correspondance française*, 1: 255–257. Margaret to Philip, 3 Jan. 1567.

[23] Ibid., 3: 118–120. Margaret to Philip, 3 Jan. 1567; J. de Iongh, *Madama, Margaretha van Oostenrijk Hertogin van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 333.

[24] *BCRH*, 12: 99–100. Register of the Council of Tournai, 3 Jan. 1567.

[25] EA 353, fo. 156–7. Margaret to Noircarmes, 3 Jan. 1567.

end of the troubles pleased many and they began to provide information about those who had participated in the insurrection. When Noircarmes sent men into the Tournaisis to disarm the villagers, he empowered them to gather information along with weapons and they did not want for informants.[26]

Based on that experience, Margaret remained convinced that she could pacify the provinces with small battalions of troops, but she could not waste them in prolonged confrontations. Should Tournai revolt, existing forces had sufficient strength to control the populace, but they would be forced to remain in the city. She thought it better to move cautiously, maintaining peace through measured intimidation so that the bulk of the troops could move on to Valenciennes. There Calvinists had bragged of powers ready to aid their cause, but their voices gradually quieted and, most telling of all to Margaret, large numbers began to slip away, fleeing to the apparent safety of Antwerp. In her letters to Noircarmes, Margaret showed an increasing confidence about dealing with Calvinists, but she insisted that he maintain the fiction that the Accord remained in effect. Thus any arrests in Tournai had to be for secular offenses, such as treason, bearing arms without royal permission, or collecting money without authority.[27]

Acting against the civil manifestations of Calvinism had its dangers. As she began her enterprise, Margaret asked all councils of justice to renew oaths and to renounce leagues and "private" agreements.[28] She ran the risk of offending all who had cooperated with the Confederates since August 1566. The forming of militias and the activities of consistories in collecting revenue had been the result of particular accords reached either by Confederates or members of the Golden Fleece with the magistrates in different cities. In some instances, she tried to smooth over the situation. She had Noircarmes present himself to Egmont in an effort to explain the new policy and to ask for his cooperation.[29] The meeting, awkward for both, mollified Egmont but did not ensure his cooperation. She made no such effort with Hoorn. He became alienated when she declared the militia in Tournai illegal, for he had conducted the negotiations leading

[26] Ibid., fo. 178–181. Letters of Margaret and Noircarmes, 6 Jan. 1567; Soldoyer, *Mémoires*, 2: 258–264; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 34–5.

[27] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 154–155. Noircarmes to Margaret, 10 Jan. 1567.

[28] *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas*, L.P. Gachard ed., 6 vols. (Brussels, 1848–1849) 2: 611–612. Margaret to all judicial authorities, 11 Jan. 1567.

[29] Ibid., 2: 617–618. Margaret to Noircarmes, 25 Jan. 1567.

to its formation and believed that he had done so in her name. Margaret never apologized for her dissimulation. After all, the leaders of the Order and the Calvinists had proved to be masters of the technique long before she practiced it. Nevertheless, the anger of Hoorn and Orange remained a worry as she placed the fortunes of her policy in the hands of men with far less stature and prestige.[30]

By the end of February 1567 the crisis began to ease. The Calvinist triumph had been more apparent than real and wherever preachers fled, enthusiasm flagged. Rassenghien wrote from Lille that he returned from the engagements at Waterloo and Lannoy to find a humbled Calvinist community.[31] Where Calvinist numbers remained large, Margaret's plan required greater dexterity. Moulbais relayed to her the anger of the Catholics of Tournai who found themselves, not the Calvinists, burdened by the troops quartered in the city. The sympathizers of the new religion among the magistrates had manipulated the assignment of billets so that those who had welcomed the soldiers had to house them.[32] Noircarmes did see some evidence of a vague Catholic renewal, although of a rather uninspired character. Churches reopened, but attendance remained low until it became compulsory, which created large but sullen congregations.[33]

The next step was the reduction of Valenciennes. All reports indicated a deteriorating situation in which the blockade of the city limited food supplies but not Calvinist fervor. Citizens and soldiers once tried to force their way past the blockade in search of food, but Margaret's soldiers defeated them soundly. Noircarmes, eager to seize the opportunity offered by weakness, wanted to conclude his business in Tournai and vowed to do so without having regard for anything.[34] However, Margaret had to ask for moderation. Dissimulation was necessary where the Calvinists remained powerful, if not dominant. She was concerned about occurrences in the northern provinces and even in parts of Flanders. Megen and Aremberg needed troops to contain their provinces, and Bois-le-Duc remained

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[30] In his *Mémoires*, Soldoyer describes the peculiar position of Hoorn in Tournai in hostile terms and took particular delight in the destruction of his following in the militia; EA 244.5, piece 38. Legal justification for the repression of Calvinists as seditious elements, 11 Jan. 1567.

[31] *Correspondance française*, 3: 165–167. Rassenghien to Margaret, 8 Jan. 1567.

[32] EA 353, fo. 186–187 and 189–191. Letters of Noircarmes and Moulbais, 9 Jan. 1567.

[33] *BCRH*, 12: 104–106. Examination by the commission of all teachers and booksellers, 10 Jan. 1567; Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 39–65 describes the steady pace of the imposition of controls.

[34] EA 353, fo. 192–234. Correspondence of Margaret and Noircarmes 10–22 Jan. 1567.

completely out of control.[35] Hence she wanted "soft and gracious" methods used against the Calvinists in areas under her control so as not to bring despair or fury to others still capable of revolt.

The members of the Golden Fleece also continued to present a danger.[36] Margaret did not want an open breach with its leaders, but clearly recognized the distance between her policy and their practices. The contrast between those who served her and the traditional leaders of the Fleece could not have been greater, for her captains eagerly sought the praise of the king and became loyal servants to her for that reason. Orange, Egmont, and Hoorn dismissed her as insignificant and sought only affirmation of independent status and power. Yet Margaret needed the influence of Orange in the north, where the power to intimidate remained a Calvinist monopoly. Megen and Aremberg, sometimes joined by Orange in Holland, could not eliminate Calvinist influence. Margaret was cautious in her letters to Orange, although her success in Tournai gave her much more confidence. Thus she denied the petition of the magistrates of Delft to have the new religion in their city and she took the occasion to denounce all such excessive and unreasonable requests.

> It seems to me that I must disabuse everyone as much to calm the good and keep them from being seduced as to bring down (if possible) the others. At least they must understand that things were not done with my tolerance or permission (which they claim). . . . I have been so upset that some go so far out of bounds on all points in such a dissolute manner that they dare to undertake acts hitherto unheard of in these provinces and press on to do things never previously done, even occupying churches and chasing away priests and monks, so much so that they have arrived at a point of disobedience and disorder that is in no way tolerable.

Determined to undo disorder by degrees starting with the most damaged and dangerous places, she expected complaints from the Confederates and dismissed them out of hand. Even the need for at least some cooperation from Orange did not check her determination. Tournai had changed everything.[37]

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[35] *Documents pour servir à l'histoire des troubles religieux du XVI^e^ siècle dans la Brabant septrional. Bois-le-Duc*, Cuypers van Velthoven ed. (Brussels: 1858), 143. Margaret to Megen, 11 Jan. 1567; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 282–286.

[36] EA 353, fo. 244. Margaret to Noircarmes, 25 Jan. 1567.

[37] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 310–315. Margaret to William, January 1567.

Some difficulties persisted.[38] Yet she also received Megen's reports of suddenly cooperative cities and towns and told him to restore all things—churches, images, and public life—to their previous condition, forcing the people to do what their place and station required. All towns had to "reintegrate" royal authority by ridding themselves of those who had usurped it. However, she also recognized that without troops such agreements might fail. In her correspondence with Hoogstraten in Antwerp she noted the continued efforts of the Calvinists to form governments when they could not force the magistrates to do their will. There, Calvinists ordered the magistrates to rebuke Catholics who had requested a garrison. Hoogstraten, young, arrogant, and not overly intelligent, did not have the necessary talent to curb such behavior.[39]

2. *Rejection*

Despite the dangers, Margaret felt confident about her pacification plan until, just as she began to enjoy a measure of success, she received devastating news from Philip II. On 30 December 1566, the king had dispatched a letter in which he criticized her sharply for continuing to advocate a pardon and a meeting of the Estates General. He reiterated his intention to come personally with a large force and did not want her to do anything that might provoke a war before his arrival. Furthermore, he had decided to replace Margaret because she had been unable to fulfill the task he had confided in her. Failure automatically ended her charge and returned it to him. Philip announced that he had given the duty to the Duke of Alva, who would go to the Netherlands to restore order in advance of his own arrival. Even more dreadful to Margaret, the king told her that Alva would be assembling a force in Luxembourg and that she, as her final duty, had to see to it that he suffered no surprises there. He closed by thanking her for such hard, if unprofitable, work.[40]

When the courier left the Spanish court, Noircarmes's troops stood on the verge of victory at Lannoy. By the time the message arrived, the success of her plans seemed at hand. In response to the king, Margaret prepared a

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[38] *Documents pour servir à l'histoire des troubles religieux du XVI^e^ siècle dans la Brabant septentrional*, 144–146; *Briefwisseling*, 357–360. Letters of Megen to Margaret, 21–22 Jan. 1567.

[39] *Correspondance française*, 3: 168–171. Hoogstraten to Margaret, 26–28 Jan. 1567.

[40] Ibid., 2: 239–245. Philip to Margaret, 30 Dec. 1566.

dispatch in which she described actions already undertaken and those she still planned. Since her reports did not relate to royal policy, Philip limited his response to vague remarks about the frustration her actions should have caused among the "sectarians" and he offered no other opinion. All of Margaret's plans had to do with pacification and reordering of affairs, whereas Philip's paternalistic view centered on outrage at his willful subjects. He explicitly ordered that she dismiss her troops and hire German units "so as to avert the danger that you would inevitably run in having only men of the Netherlands who could not be trained in proper numbers and whose goodness could not be assured in the midst of such widespread disobedience." He also wanted her to thank the members of the Council of State and then, in effect, to stop meeting. Despite their good intentions, he was determined to resolve all matters by himself. He also ordered Margaret to have all local estates cease meeting until he arrived.[41] Thus the king discounted all her plans and policies even as he acknowledged her success and sent her more money to secure victory. He clearly thought nothing good could be instigated by a court that had allowed the troubles to start. In his view, everyone shared guilt, and Margaret's endeavor to pacify and restore the Netherlands only offered greater evidence of the perfidious nature of the provinces. To Philip, individuals seeking to fulfill their own desires abused and misled the people, destroying the true relationship between loyal subjects and their natural prince.[42]

Until Philip's letters arrived, Margaret had thought that her hardest problem would be the peaceful restoration of Antwerp. Afterwards she feared the king's attitude toward the provinces even more than the recalcitrant, obstinate city. Margaret had taken great pride in personal intervention, either directly or through her captains. Success in having people return to the Catholic and loyalist side independently gave her great pleasure, and she used force as a last resort. Her policy toward Malines served as an example. When the town had appeared to be accepting Calvinism, she sent a member of her own household to plead with the magistrates. In response, they had driven him from the town. However, Margaret refused to cease trying to find a peaceful solution and following her repeated efforts the magistrates had welcomed her man back and put a stop to sermons.[43]

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41 Ibid., 2: 262–267. Philip to Margaret, 26 Jan. 1567.
42 EA. 206, fo. 48. Philip to the Privy Council, 19 Mar. 1567.
43 *Correspondance française*, 2: 270. Margaret to Philip, 8 Feb. 1567.

She relished such efforts and delighted in indications that heresy languished. Many people remained involved, but she felt that large numbers could be prodded back into the Catholic fold. Margaret personally hated heresy, but never had any intention of organizing mass executions. She praised Orange for managing to disperse a Calvinist force in Holland without any casualties, and she noted that in Megen's government the raising of troops had been sufficient to encourage many citizens to seek their way back to duty and obedience. The situation remained uncertain in the maritime provinces under Orange's supervision. Margaret suspected his loyalty, but had to deal with him to prevent disorder, and Orange had to maintain at least some contact with her to fulfill the offices that he still valued. Orange seemed wholly confused about his place and duty, wanting to resist Philip but remaining reluctant to go into open revolt. The prince's relations with Brederode worried Margaret, as did the number of unpaid troops each had in the area. In the times of scarcity that prevailed, each soldier required five florins per month, almost twice the usual amount. Orange feared that garrison troops would break out of the towns assigned to them and plunder the countryside. However, Margaret hesitated to fund Orange when she knew that his brother, Louis of Nassau, remained with him and had helped to organize a meeting of Confederates and Calvinists in Amsterdam. Representatives from Antwerp, Bois-le-Duc, Tournai, Valenciennes, Harderwijk, Delft, Leiden, and Edam gathered in what Margaret viewed as a seditious assembly held under Louis's protection. She candidly told Orange that his loyalty and dedication to the public was doubted in the Council of State.[44]

Orange refused to apologize for any of his relationships and emphasized his attachment to past forms in dealing with current problems. He asked Margaret not to believe the accusations against him by people who had not committed themselves directly to the pacification process. They exaggerated matters and fabricated conspiracies involving Calvinists and Confederates whenever anyone sought an audience with him. In the case of his brother, Orange reminded Margaret that Louis professed the same religion when he served Charles V, who had not protested. When the prince explained Amsterdam's accord with the Calvinists, he used the justification of necessity, one frequently found in Margaret's own reports. The accord granted the use of buildings and substantial rights of religious

[44] *Correspondance… Orange*, 2: 324–331. Letters of William and Margaret, 12–15 January 1567; Iongh, *Madama*, 335.

exercise to the Calvinists, contending that their numbers required such submission. To Orange, the accord ended two years of confrontation and bitter enmity between the bourgeoisie and the magistrates of Amsterdam and thus secured peace and order. To Margaret, the agreement embraced everything she rejected. The victory in Tournai emboldened her and she repudiated the legality of many of the Amsterdam provisions, decrying them as scandalous innovations. She then challenged the legitimacy of magistrates who refused to swear to king and faith. As a final point, she ordered the city to repair all Catholic churches and to restore Catholic worship, both demands she knew they would disobey.[45]

While victory in Flanders made Margaret bold, she began to have questions about what Philip intended to do with the "corrupt" cities and towns she had restored to obedience. Margaret desired to impose order, but disliked the thought of leaving everyone in suspense until Philip actually arrived because she regarded uncertainty as a form of injustice. Those culpable in the insurrection had to be punished, but she wanted to get it over with and begin reconciling the factions. Even those Confederates who came to her out of disenchantment with what happened needed to know what awaited them. The alternative, uncertainty, would permeate the land with despair.[46] Margaret dreaded the prospect of acting like a jailer and harbored hopes that she could win Philip over to her policy of moderate retribution. Indeed, she ignored royal orders to do nothing and began to initiate the second part of her plan, beginning again with Tournai. Discussions in the Council of State centered on the dangers of the task. Viglius felt that diversity of religion had created hatred between groups and moderation was essential in restoring everyone to a single faith. Other members worried about the opposition of the Fleece and the Confederates, but all agreed that the plan had to proceed.[47]

Noircarmes, as Margaret wished, began to reestablish some functions of government in Tournai with new, unquestionably orthodox magistrates. He ignored traditional election procedures and selected men who had actually stood up to the Calvinists. Limitations imposed on the city by martial law became permanent through ordinances prepared in Brussels that eliminated Calvinist worship. Only men ordained in the Catholic Church could administer sacraments. Baptisms and marriages performed

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[45] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 235–353. Letters of William and Margaret, 16–24 January 1567.

[46] *Correspondance française*, 2: 267–277. Margaret to Philip, 8 Feb. 1567.

[47] Berty, *Notules*, 431–434. Meetings in February, 1567.

by Calvinist ministers had to be redone, and Calvinist burials in sanctified ground had to be removed. The entire list of things regarded by Margaret as abuses, from poor relief to schooling, became specifically forbidden. The new ordinance rendered illegal and void all obligations undertaken as part of the Calvinist community and prohibited in the strongest terms any proselytizing. Only presenting sermons remained a legal Calvinist activity, but they were forbidden within the city and no one could leave the walls.[48] The new ordinances completed a revolutionary transformation in Tournai. Without loss of life or property, Margaret had injected the presence of the Brussels court directly into the governance of Tournai. For the first time since her father captured the city, the magistrates had to respond to commands from Brussels. Her declared purpose had been to restore the city to obedience and to make it conform to what she perceived to be its own good and that of the king. In February the newly reorganized judiciary began trials of those charged with crimes arising from the insurrection. The magistrates began executions on a scaffold constructed of material retrieved from the Calvinist temple as the soldiers tore it down.[49]

Part of the reason for her success in Tournai had been the presence of the citadel, an asset that she did not have in dealing with Valenciennes, Antwerp, Bois-le-Duc, and the variety of troubled towns in the north. During the reduction of Tournai, Valenciennes became ever more difficult. The Calvinists seemed naive, petitioning Noircarmes as he reduced Tournai to let them be loyal subjects of the king according to their own beliefs.[50] As the defeat of Calvinism in Tournai became clear, both Margaret and the people of Valenciennes hardened their positions, leading her to declare them rebellious. Noircarmes's primary task once again became the preparation for an assault on a city, and this time no citadel dominated its skyline.

Margaret's loyal captains in the north, Megen and Aremberg, had even fewer resources to help contain a volatile religious and political situation. In addition, the influence of the Prince of Orange in his governorships in Holland, Utrecht, and Zeeland added uncertainty. The presence of Anabaptists and Lutherans clouded the religious issue.[51] Megen's major difficulty

[48] *BCRH*, 12: 100–106. Ordinances of Tournai, 22 Feb. 1567.

[49] Le Barre and Soldoyer, *Mémoires*, 2: 24–26 and 259–260.

[50] *Correspondance française*, 3: 162–4, Petition of the Calvinists to Noircarmes, January 1567.

[51] Ibid., 3: 171–187. Letters of the magistrates of Utrecht and Dordrecht, and of Aremberg and Margaret, Jan.–Feb., 1567.

in northern Brabant and in Gelderland came from a lack of manpower. While he had forces sufficient to coerce small towns such as Bommel into abandoning religious freedom and accepting a garrison, he met with stiff opposition from Bois-le-Duc and other larger cities. Margaret allowed him to negotiate whenever possible, but had grown wary of the accords that individual towns demanded. Margaret and Megen moved carefully, saving confrontation for the large towns and cities, which he said really deserved a wound or two.[52] Margaret shared his impatience, but her new orders constrained her and she had to ask Megen to be clever, even coy, in dealing with Bois-le-Duc. Megen scorned her desire to use soft ways, claiming that with only a few more troops he could stop wasting his time. However, Margaret also heard alarming reports from Antwerp that Confederates who sought to join forces with Brederode and sweep Megen from Brabant were raising troops. That forced her to change Megen's orders. If he encountered small groups of Confederate soldiers, then she wanted him to attack, but if a large force took to the field, she ordered prompt withdrawal using any face-saving excuse.[53]

Megen, always independent and unafraid to speak his mind, constantly reminded Margaret of the limitations of her policy. Untroubled by the prospect of civil war, he could have confronted the Confederates at every opportunity if he had sufficient force. That, however, was the problem and he was unable to engage a large Confederate force as it marched toward Utrecht. Megen had accurate reports that the Confederates massed at Brederode's personal residence in Vianen near Utrecht, which he regarded as the key city. Unable to act, Megen had to watch them move into Vianen, which he found well-fortified by walls and water, thus creating a dangerous new center.[54] With his new Confederate force safe in that town, Brederode engaged Margaret in a battle of pamphlets that she welcomed as an opportunity to establish her policies clearly. She therefore published everything Brederode sent to her along with her response.

Confederate pamphlets sought to separate their cause from the disordered people who had attacked churches and committed other disruptive acts. They protested that Margaret had believed unfavorable reports about them and had not allowed them to negotiate pacification agreements without interference. Brederode included a petition from the Calvinists

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[52] *Briefwisseling*, 364–374; Van Velthoven, *Documents . . . Bois-le-Duc*, 148–150. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 1–8 Feb. 1567.

[53] *Briefwisseling*, 375–391. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 8–19 Feb. 1567.

[54] Ibid., 392–410. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 20–25 Feb. 1567.

that presented the Accord as a concordat creating new conditions of service to God, king, and country. The Calvinists accused Margaret of misleading them with false promises and demanded a clear statement of her intentions so that they could act accordingly. Her response denied ever having allowed freedom of religion. She contended that duty required the Confederates to curb the growth of preaching. Bound by duty to protect royal and magisterial authority, the basis of justice, Margaret expressed her determination to work with good subjects to contain those who spread confusion in faith and public life. She then denounced the raising of troops and taking of fortifications by the Confederates, made vague allusions to treasonable acts, and enjoined them to return to their homes and cease interfering in public affairs.[55]

On paper Margaret thus showed her determination to confront Calvinism, but she had to be cautious in actual relations. With Brederode in the field with an undetermined number of troops, Margaret implemented a plan designed to confine his activity to those towns already deemed "bad." Megen could then attack each town individually, as Noircarmes did in the south. She knew that Alva would arrive with a vastly larger force, but hoped that if he found the area peaceful, with preachers having been driven away and Calvinism suppressed, then Philip would follow a moderate course and the army would not be used. In her correspondence, Margaret initiated an effort to reason with the king, praising his objectives in faith and governance, but asking him to consider the particular situation of the Netherlands. She reminded him that a multitude of offenders awaited him if he chose to use the placards as the basis for punishment. Crowds of people had committed one sin or another, but had become eager to submit if offered pardon. Otherwise they would flee, taking trade and industry with them, profiting neighboring lands and desolating the Netherlands. She wanted him to proclaim a clear plan of punishment mixed with grace, making repentance, public humiliation, and fines substitute for the threat of execution. Margaret excluded the obstinate people whose beliefs and conduct made them pernicious to the body politic. All others should feel hope rather than the rope around their necks, or else they would despair, something that in her opinion bred extremism. Margaret begged Philip to allow her to continue her limited war on Calvinism, and she used the language of hunting to describe what she had in store for the preachers and organizers of consistories. She knew this worked, having

[55] *Letter* of Brederode and Margaret's *Response* (Brussels, 1567).

used the policy to isolate the unrepentant elements in Gelderland and Frisia. By prosecuting only some individuals and warring against others like Brederode, Margaret felt that she had rescued the commonwealth.[56]

The aristocracy remained a weakness in Margaret's policy and appeared thus in her appeal to the king. Orange, Egmont, Hoorn, and Hoogstraten continued to lead a substantial number of aristocrats sympathetic with the Confederates rather than with the crown. Part of her policy deliberately created a sharp division between the court and the activities of the Confederates. During the previous summer the Confederates had become so deeply involved in Calvinism that she did not bother to separate the two. However, the issuance of the Accord had linked Margaret with the Confederates, compromising her before Philip, and her determination to rectify the damage to her character made her adopt a hard line. Thus when Brederode requested a safe-conduct to journey to court to present additional demands, she rejected the petition flatly, and asked Orange to renew his efforts to curb the Confederates. Perfectly aware of Orange's hostility, she did not shrink from reminding him of the oaths and obligations binding him to the governance of the land. She knew that if the Golden Fleece reacted negatively, it would not be a small matter, but she still felt bound to take a chance with them, hoping for cooperation in the interests of pacification. Fear of the king continued to complicate matters. She wrote to him of rumors that questioned his intentions, "daring to announce and maintain that Your Majesty is not coming because of other duties . . . making this public challenge with words that are disparaging and intolerable" claiming that he only intended to impose servitude on all the people, both Catholic and Calvinist.[57]

In the meantime, the problems that had incapacitated Margaret's government in the first place persisted. Insolvency made her fall behind on loan payments, leading to the arrest of merchants from the towns of Brabant and Flanders when they traveled to Germany. Antwerp and Ghent, which contributed to the costs of the Confederate army, did not concern her, but she regretted that towns that had supported the government suffered. Tenremonde and Alost had remained loyal and firmly Catholic, and she wrote to Philip of the scandal of seeing good people being arrested for having obligated themselves to him.[58] Margaret also

[56] *Correspondance française*, 2: 277–281. Margaret to Philip, 9 Feb. 1567.
[57] Ibid., 2: 281. Margaret to Philip, 9 Feb. 1567.
[58] Ibid., 3: 158–161. Margaret to Philip, 16 Feb. 1567.

had to beg to be allowed to continue the attack on Valenciennes. Philip, she felt, interfered unjustly in her efforts to reduce an openly and willfully disobedient city. She remained determined to bring the city down as an example to others. He never commented on any of her plans, for nothing could sway him from a policy of retributive justice, concocted by councils in Spain and placed in the hands of Alva. In the early months of 1567, Margaret did not realize the enormity of the change he planned. He drafted bland letters to her, fretting only over the possibility that his army might be ambushed on the Spanish Road from Italy to the Netherlands. Margaret became merely a caretaker whose opinions lacked significance but whose presence remained necessary to avert anarchy. Given her attachment to the Netherlands and the political tradition of compromise and shared duties that she followed, Margaret failed to grasp what he intended. Thus she continued to write to him and to her secretaries in Madrid asking for consideration of her plans, or at least for some kind of response. She received neither.[59]

Anxiety about Philip's intentions never created paralysis, and Margaret continued to work against Valenciennes and to try to contain Brederode. There were accurate reports from Antwerp about the recruitment and arming of the troops, and she listed the aristocrats involved and the units under their command in a letter to Orange. The ease with which the Confederates raised money among the merchants of Antwerp also made her worry. To check their threat to the northern provinces, Megen remained in Utrecht and she dispatched Beauvoir, another loyal captain, to occupy the royal fortress at Walcheren which held stores of artillery and munitions. This daring move secured Zeeland, but she could do nothing against Amsterdam except to order its magistrates to prevent entry of non-royal troops.

Thus news of a failure accompanied every success she reported to Philip. Furthermore, she had to relate the growing evidence she had about the conspiracy of Orange and Hoogstraten. She had nothing conclusive, but she knew that the openly defiant Brederode consulted with Orange on every issue. To make certain, she sent a secretary, d'Assonleville, to ask Orange to renew his oath. The prince's attitude, always ambiguous on important subjects, helped to maintain factions and left the court divided in its opinion of him. She regarded his open discontent as dangerous, almost rebellious, since everyone could believe what they wished

[59] Ibid., 3: 102 and 162. Letters of Margaret, 17 and 26 Feb. 1567.

about him. To her, his lack of support contributed to disruptive events in Bois-le-Duc. Bombergen, Brederode's lieutenant in Bois-le-Duc, seized control and claimed to be acting on the orders of Orange, thus clearly challenging the regent's authority. Orange remained silent on the subject.[60] His refusal to conform to Margaret's wishes and to renew his oath to the king before the Council of State infuriated her, but she did not want anything said or done that would offend him directly, although she warned of the treachery of his followers. In March, Orange asked to be relieved of his duties, but Margaret avoided answering, feeling that the situation was too uncertain for an open breach.[61]

She took greater pleasure in Megen's success in Utrecht. He sent the preacher out of the town with rough words and disarmed the followers of the Confederates. That made him eager to attack Vianen, but Margaret, much less certain, feared that such an attack would induce civil war in the area and cost her any possibility of securing Amsterdam. She did give him authority to act against Brederode without any further consultation. Megen's blunt words about what he saw as her equivocation hardly charmed Margaret, but she admired the personal force that he brought to the issues. In his opinion, a few cut throats seemed a very good idea.[62] While Margaret liked that prospect, she had to worry about forces being raised at Antwerp, the siege of Valenciennes, and the position of Amsterdam. One force raised by the Calvinist captain Jan van Marnix left Antwerp in boats to attack Zeeland, but it was repelled by an artillery barrage at Vlissingen. She wanted Megen to have some troops on hand to deal with Marnix's men if they reappeared, while also keeping troops free to counter Brederode. Megen sympathized with her range of worries but had grown tired of words and preferred silence if action became impossible. He passed on a rumor that Brederode had announced to Amsterdam's magistrates that "our king will arrive sooner than that of Spain, and to far greater purpose." Brederode and his group still corresponded with Margaret and some letters challenged her directly. She refused to respond, but continued to wait, restraining Megen from a full confrontation with Brederode until Noircarmes settled Valenciennes. Beauvoir's force managed a small victory at Ousterweel near Antwerp, which pleased Margaret but made Megen even more impatient and angry. She pleaded with Megen

[60] Ibid., 2: 289–296. Margaret to Philip, 29 Feb. 1567.
[61] Berty, *Notules*. 426–431. Meetings during March, 1567.
[62] *Briefwisseling*, 411–421. Megen to Margaret, 2–6 March 1567.

to be content until the completion of the business at Valenciennes. Only then would he have enough troops to be more than just a nuisance.[63]

Margaret kept to the modest pace she had established in Tournai. She wanted to avoid internal violence in divided cities where she was distressed by the plight of their Catholic citizens who remained bewildered and stunned by events. For them, the situation seemed hopeless. The magistrates continued to make the Catholics bear the burden of the costs of maintaining the militia. In places she did not control, Calvinism continued to advocate change. Margaret felt that Antwerp had become a new Babylon, a place fraught with confusion where concepts of justice and order became lost and where each person did precisely as he or she wished. However, she also had come to realize the precarious position of the new religion and entertained the possibility that Antwerp could be fooled, as she put it, just as easily as other cities.[64]

The weakest part of Margaret's plan remained its financial underpinning. The small, loyal battalions she had in the field at Valenciennes, Tournai, Utrecht, and Zeeland went unpaid. The very situation that required her to have the soldiers prevented her from gaining tax revenue in the traditional fashion. The king had forbidden the meeting of all estates, so even newly amenable groups, such as the Estates of Brabant, could not convene.[65] Thus Margaret ordered unpaid troops into dangerous situations. When she dispatched Beauvoir to Zeeland to counter the Calvinist force that had sailed from Antwerp, he marched through an area where many towns had decided that neutrality represented the only safe policy, and they chose to receive the soldiers of neither side. Since the forces in the field only numbered in the hundreds, they could afford that luxury, but their defiance underscored how sorely diminished the regent's power and prestige had become. The towns of Zeeland did not know of her dismissal or of the journey of the Duke of Alva, facts that might have encouraged a different attitude.[66] On every side Margaret had to deal with people who tried to ignore her efforts but who still needed her offices as a last bulwark against utter confusion and civil war. Philip disdained her policies even when she proved their effectiveness. He never acknowledged the commitments in Tournai, which left even her military officials uneasy about their status. On the other side, Orange wrote to her in often outrageously

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63 Ibid., 421–451. Letters of Megen, Brederode and Margaret, 7–16 Mar. 1567.
64 *Correspondance française*, 2: 296–298. Margaret to Philip, 5 Mar. 1567.
65 Ibid., 3: 194–195. Margaret to Philip, 4 Mar. 1567.
66 Ibid., 2: 298–300. Margaret to Philip, 5 Mar. 1567.

vague and duplicitous terms. The prince demanded audiences to explain his moves, but he always wanted her to praise him in advance and to condemn those who criticized him. Neither Margaret nor the council dared to cross Orange, for they still attempted to govern according the traditional patterns that required him to give the appearance of participating.[67]

In March, Philip limited his response to partial approval of her plans and to chiding Margaret for filling her letters with warnings. He deemed good the piecemeal operations against rebellious cities, but he worried about Valenciennes being too great a foe for such tactics. In a departure from his usual attitude, Philip admitted "these are matters which must be thought about and considered on the spot without one imposing law from afar" and that she should proceed as circumstances required, if the attack did not create slaughter or greater difficulties in another quarter. Since he had already dispatched Alva with strict orders to punish the Netherlands, Philip's warnings to avoid going to extremes were peculiar.[68] Most of the other royal letters dealt with raising troops in the German provinces. Margaret had been an unwilling participant in the project, regarding some of the mercenaries as more heretical than any found in the Netherlands. She was bemused by the policy of the Duke of Brunswick, who did not allow his mercenaries to be used against Lutherans. Aside from that modest provision, he seemed content that the king should employ them in any situation. Deploying such mercenaries troubled Margaret, who regarded the divisions among the Protestant sects as a potential source of dangerous confrontations.[69] In general, Margaret wanted to avoid entangling the Germans in the affairs of the Netherlands. In contrast, Philip had become determined to use German soldiers because he distrusted those recruited in the Netherlands. He ordered her to dismiss local troops whenever she ran short of money, but always to pay the Germans. As for her reluctance to deal with the Duke of Brunswick, Philip expressly commanded her to do precisely as he had ordered.[70]

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[67] Ibid., 2: 301–2. Margaret to Philip, 5 Mar. 1567.

[68] Ibid., 2: 302–303. Philip to Margaret, 13 Mar. 1567.

[69] Ibid., 3: 187–188 and 226–229. Letters of the Duke of Brunswick and Margaret to Chantonay in Vienna, 1567.

[70] Ibid., 2: 308–314. Philip to Margaret, 13 Mar. 1567.

CHAPTER NINE

POISONED PEACE

1. *Restoring Rule*

Ignoring the king's repudiation of her efforts, Margaret proceeded as if her own policy remained permanent and unquestioned. Had the provinces known about Philip's intentions, trouble would have erupted everywhere. Hoping to change the king's mind, Margaret continued negotiations with Antwerp and threats against Valenciennes, Bois-le-Duc, and Maastricht. Too few troops and too little money prevented decisive action, but she had enough to contain the existing Calvinist and Confederate forces. In Valenciennes, the mood kept shifting between absolute defiance and petitions asking that the Calvinists be allowed to leave the city. With an extraordinary lack of understanding, Calvinists who petitioned to leave demanded that their property be secure, that losses incurred in the past because of the blockade be made good, and that the fines and legal restrictions leveled against the town be lifted.

Margaret challenged them, declaring all property in the city forfeit because of their rebellion and conceding only that their lives would be spared if they capitulated. Informants told Noircarmes that the two preachers there held divided opinions over resistance, with Guy de Bray advocating surrender and La Grange wanting to fight to the last. Noircarmes thought that their divisions would create a bitter struggle the moment they heard cannon fire. Many Calvinists had already abandoned Valenciennes, and apprehension pervaded the city. At night Noircarmes's forces frequently encountered people fleeing the city in one place and a skirmishing party in another. During the day he received requests for negotiations, but none of the deputations could represent the entire city. Margaret wrote urging him to impose conditions on Valenciennes that would be humiliating and painful for its most important inhabitants, but she truly desired to spare the city.[1]

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[1] *Correspondance française*, 3: 209–226. Letters of Aerschot, Egmont, Noircarmes, Margaret and the Calvinists of Valenciennes, 8–23 Mar. 1567; *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d'Orange*, Gachard ed., 6 vols. (Brussels: 1847–1866), 2: 501–2. 8 Mar. 1567.

She hoped to force the issue by the end of March in order to free troops for Megen. He felt that Margaret missed too many opportunities to act, but she retorted that Valenciennes required force immediately. Additional troops had to be deployed only to meet specific situations, as when she heard of a Calvinist plot in Amsterdam to seize Middlebourg and ordered Megen to send Dutch-speaking troops under a discreet captain to counter the effort. Unable to deal with actual combat in two places, Margaret sought to avoid confrontation, to play at political chess rather than to wage uncertain war. Megen wanted at least to simplify the situation by forcing the Confederates in his midst to cease the pretense of serving the king, as in Utrecht where the magistrate in charge of supervising the loyalty oath had himself refused to take it. Spies flourished everywhere, so Megen knew a great deal about his adversaries, just as the Confederates had knowledge of his own efforts. In a city as divided as Amsterdam, he told Margaret that she could turn things topsy-turvy by banning the followers of Brederode, but she saw the potential for civil war in such a gesture.[2]

The situation changed abruptly when Valenciennes capitulated on March 24, 1567. Noircarmes had placed increasing pressure on the city, and the lack of unity among its citizens had eroded opposition. The court had watched the proceedings carefully, dreading the prospect of stalemate but knowing the futility of negotiations with Calvinists and Confederates. Margaret grew more confident when the forces of Brederode remained in the north and when Antwerp showed no inclination to assist Valenciennes with more than words. The conclusion followed an artillery barrage that brought the magistrates to terms immediately. The capitulation climaxed a bleak month for the Calvinists.[3] Megen knew the victory by Noircarmes would facilitate his efforts to separate lukewarm Confederates from the ranks of Brederode's followers. In his opinion, a little artillery would put a stop to disturbances in minor cities, leaving Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Bois-le-Duc as the only points of confrontation.[4]

However, Margaret was keenly aware of the danger posed by the powerful cities that had the population and wealth to mount formidable

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See also the collection of material in P.J. Le Boucq, *Histoire des troubles advenues à Valencienne à cause des héresies (1562–1579)* (Brussels: 1864).

[2] *Correspondance française*, 2: 215 and 223–226. Letters of Margaret and Noircarmes; *Briefwisseling*, 455–462. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 18–22 Mar. 1567.

[3] G.P. Guicciardini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini al Cosimo e Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1577*, Battistine ed. (Rome: 1949), 287–292.

[4] *Briefwisseling*, 463–484. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 18–31 Mar. 1567.

opposition. Previously, Antwerp's Calvinists made open plans to attack Brussels, or at least, the more likely plan in Margaret's view, to ravage rural church holdings in Brabant. Orange remained in Antwerp and Margaret did not hide from the king her growing differences with him. Throughout March, Margaret had come to identify Orange as the chief conspirator in the events instigated by Brederode and in the challenges to her authority in all of the northern cities. She wanted Philip's approval to replace Orange, Hoogstraten, and other members of the Golden Fleece with her new captains, in particular Noircarmes, Rassenghien, and Mansfeld. However, such hopes depended on success on the battlefield, and lack of sufficient forces imperiled her policy. In an effort to bring Amsterdam to terms, she sent Jacques de la Torre to deal with the magistrates, but he quickly became embroiled in the contest between Calvinist and Catholic magistrates, being subjected to arrest on one day and being respected as her representative on another. The commissioners she sent to Bois-le-Duc suffered imprisonment, and she had no recourse.[5]

As she scoured friendly provinces in Germany and Burgundy for powder and shot in order to continue her enterprises, Margaret chided Philip for his failure to journey to the Netherlands promptly. She felt he should have arrived in March. His distant direction from Spain and his refusal to support her pacification plan made everything more difficult. Even good Catholic merchants feared what the king had in mind and expressed reluctance to underwrite her expenses.[6] Philip only responded with a contrived letter in which he expressed shock and outrage at all that had transpired and claimed that the time had come for his own troops to deal with the situation. He stripped Margaret of all remaining authority, ordered her to correspond with Alva, who had started his journey north, and commanded her to do nothing that might make his task more difficult. The letter, which the king had prepared in January but did not send until March, left Madrid just as the encounter with Valenciennes reached its climax.[7] It caught Margaret by surprise because of her optimistic view that success would restore Philip's opinion of her and of the Netherlands. Stunned, she took to her bed for a week, suffering from stress and showing the first signs of the liver disease that would return to plague her time and again.

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[5] *Correspondance française*, 2: 315–321. Margaret to Philip, 16 Mar. 1567.
[6] Ibid., 2: 321–322. Margaret to Philip, 18 Mar. 1567.
[7] Ibid., 2: 324–325. Philip to Margaret, 19 Mar. 1567.

Philip wanted to be done with her, but Alva's slow trip along the Spanish Road required continued correspondence with Margaret, whose anger at being dismissed increased as the success of her policy became more apparent. She had to wait for Alva even as she accomplished the tasks Philip commissioned him to perform. Worse, Alva carried powers from Philip that had been denied to her and that would have made her regime strong and effective. The bitter reality of being denied power to maintain peace only to see it granted to one who was to wage war was hard to accept.[8] Nevertheless, Philip's indifference did not diminish her determination to strike down the Calvinists, whose violence and boldness continued to amaze her. At the same time she feared Philip's response because it negated what she thought to be true and solid remedies. Despair caused by fear of Philip's intentions nourished problems and encouraged divisions and factions. The hostile position of Orange, who seemed to counter all her plans and convert each of her remedies into new problems, lent credibility to the faltering Confederate cause and townspeople began to look to him rather than to her and the king. Other great aristocrats, such as Hoorn and Egmont, became less determined in their opposition, but they had withdrawn from court and refused to renew their oaths.[9]

For Megen, the opposition of his fellow aristocrats increased the threat of civil war in the north, but Margaret also had to worry about Maastricht, another important rebellious city and next on Noircarmes's list of places to subdue. Thus Megen's fears that his troops would be crushed, the countryside looted, and the peasants fricasseed by a large, angry group from Vianen had to remain unaddressed. Megen even related, and not without pleasure, the common rumor that since Margaret tolerated the "dog burrow" at Vianen, she must have an agreement with Brederode. Although he subsequently apologized for his remark, his lack of restraint came at the same moment that Philip II, writing to him directly, ordered him to be the commander of artillery for the Duke of Alva. His initial delight at the position became apprehension because the order required him to assemble all available artillery and move it to Luxembourg to await the arrival of Alva. The new charge, along with Megen's rude impatience, irritated Margaret, who had to tell him bluntly that other places had greater importance than Vianen and that he did not grasp a number of issues that

[8] J. de Iongh, *Madama. Margaretha van Oostenrijk Hertogin van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 335–336.

[9] *Correspondance française*, 3: 218–222. Margaret to Philip, 23 Mar. 1567.

she herself had to manage. Megen also had to answer to Alva, which put him in the complicated position of being an agent of two strikingly different policies. Margaret became disturbed by the implications of removing artillery from the Netherlands only to bring it back in the train of foreign forces. She congratulated Megen on his new command and told him that questions about policy changes had to go to the new master. However, in the meantime she intended to continue her old policy of pacification and demanded his complete participation.[10]

Although reports of incidents continued from every quarter of the Netherlands, they ceased to form any pattern and Margaret took considerable pleasure in the state of affairs in April 1567. Her opponents, now unprotected, faltered. Preachers fled, hitherto irresolute magistrates increasingly chose to return to the Catholic cause, notably in Maastricht and Bois-le-Duc, and the disaffected Calvinists and Confederates withdrew to limited areas, such as Antwerp and Amsterdam. Even those cities divided along religious lines, and the previously brazen Calvinists began to view the future with unease. By the end of April Margaret felt confident enough to deal personally with Antwerp, ordering a detachment of her own household troops to establish a small garrison. She promised to go to Antwerp and assume the task of pacifying the city. Orange withdrew to his German possessions in anger and frustration, sending a letter claiming that family business called him away, but he left at the head of a large convoy of Protestants. Orange did have to write a cordial note to Margaret asking that she allow his daughter to join him in Germany. She was equally pleasant in reply, for it was not in her nature to regard the child as a hostage. Despite Orange's ambiguous contributions to her government, her plan had worked and she was in a generous frame of mind. The prize was Antwerp. Its period of opposition ended when, as Guicciardini wrote, the authors of evil took to their heels. However, Margaret knew that her dismissal by Philip made the point almost irrelevant if the king did not moderate his orders to the Duke of Alva. The merchants who returned to Antwerp as she renewed relations with the city did not know of the pending change in government. At court, all attention shifted to Alva's mission and Margaret's apprehension grew as he made his slow progress along the Spanish Road.[11]

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[10] *Briefwisseling*, 484–497. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 1–10 Apr. 1567.
[11] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 293–296.

The decision to gather artillery in Luxembourg provided an opportunity to beg Philip for reason. She pleaded that moving the pieces to the south only to bring them north would consume men, material, and money, wasting the land and its resources. It would also put the French and German cities in the area on a war footing. Furthermore, Margaret requested that he reconsider the size of the force under Alva's command. Why squander money on unnecessary soldiers? After all, she had pacified most of the provinces and would have them all in hand by the time Alva arrived. She reduced some towns by force and others by fear, but all remained in a state of apprehension since she could not tell the citizens what their future would be. Prosperous people, perplexed and fearful, had started to flee the land, further impoverishing the cities. Leaving judicial decisions in suspense made necessary punishment unjust, since in her mind justice had to be swift.[12]

Margaret also had to protest the king's decision to save money by dismissing local troops in order to pay for the German levies. She had a list of practical reasons, including her fear that they would simply substitute Lutheranism for Calvinism and that, being indifferent to the country, the Germans would delight in fouling and smashing the Netherlands. However, in her mind it seemed far worse to disregard the soldiers who had remained loyal even when unpaid. Their honest resentment might cause even greater difficulties if they demanded back pay before disbanding.[13] In order to make these points more forcefully and also to plead for moderation, Margaret dispatched Gaspar de Robles, a Portuguese captain in Philips' service, to Madrid. He had been present at each of Noircarmes's victories and understood her policy of pacification. She expressed all of her fears for the future of the Netherlands in the instruction prepared for Robles, including her regret over the detention of Berghes and Montigny, her previous emissaries. They had not wanted to go to Spain and she had compelled them to do so, something that embarrassed and chagrined her. Margaret wanted Robles to emphasize that uncertainty about Philip's plans had to be resolved. Even the people whose hard and brave work had enabled her to overcome the disastrous Calvinist insurrection became uncertain about the future. She and her council had worked unceasingly to accomplish a total pacification without great loss of life or wealth, but Philip seemed to ignore her success and to want to spend

[12] *Correspondance française*, 2: 330–334. Margaret to Philip, 10 Apr. 1567.
[13] Ibid., 2: 334–335. Margaret to Philip, 10 Apr. 1567.

exorbitant sums to accomplish already completed tasks. Through Robles she begged him to acknowledge the large number of good subjects in the Netherlands and to admit that the bad already suffered chastisement and harassment. With keen foresight, she cautioned that a multitude of foreign soldiers inflicting punishment indiscriminately could only occasion a resumption of revolt. Margaret insisted that good subjects had never lost confidence in the king, but that the future had to include compromise and even political expedients if he wanted to preserve the prosperity and well-being of the land.[14]

Lest Philip regard her efforts as those of temporizing and softness, Margaret related the details of the assault on Valenciennes. These included a bombardment of a day and a half, with twenty cannon firing three thousand shots, following which the city capitulated without reservation. Women and children stood in the streets crying for mercy while the men hid in the houses. She expressed particular pleasure that thirteen companies of soldiers entered the city without bloodshed or looting and that Noircarmes followed normal judicial processes in arresting, interrogating, and executing the perpetrators of the rebellion. As in the case of Tournai and other cities deemed "bad," she removed the magistrates and voided most privileges. She related all this to Philip with the intention of emphasizing how, using Tournai and Valenciennes as models, she had restored cities to order and punished the Calvinist activists. Collective guilt had little significance; the people who had tolerated the insurrection and even participated to a small degree should only suffer public humiliation. Magistrates and leading citizens should abase themselves before a representative of royal authority (she even thought he might like to participate) and then suffer monetary and corporal punishment. True to her view of proper governance, Margaret remained adamant that the penalties should follow precedent and that the punishment inflicted on the city as a public body also be in keeping with the traditions of the provinces. She saw an opportunity to curtail privileges, but sought only to limit, not destroy them. However, the king also had to pardon less guilty citizens so that they could return to commerce,

> . . . because each day those who regard themselves as guilty, of whom there is a great multitude, take flight and become fugitives, some here, some there, from one end to the other, some in France, others in England, Scotland, Germany, Cleves, Emden and elsewhere, and more will be if Your

[14] Ibid., 3: 240–242. 12 Apr. 1567.

> Majesty does not see to the matter soon; cities could become depopulated and desolate from want of grace and pardon, and I have my hands tied by Your Majesty.[15]

Margaret herself felt pride in the accomplishment in Valenciennes and confident that success would follow in the cities next on her list. In her view, events in Valenciennes intimidated Antwerp and amazed Bois-le-Duc. Her aggressive posture toward both cities, to her a refreshing change from the attitude that circumstances had dictated before, troubled magistrates and became a real source of irritation for the Confederate leadership. When Bois-le-Duc arrested her representative, she issued a ban on the city and refused to correspond with it until the magistrates released him. They complied promptly. She became equally adamant in her dealings with Antwerp. In a bold departure from her previous restraint, Margaret publicly rejected all agreements made by Orange and his agent Hoogstraeten and she compelled representatives to capitulate and receive a garrison before she journeyed to the city to discuss its future. She reported that the multitude of guilty people had begun to dash about in confusion and those who could do so fled. Before Orange withdrew to Germany, Margaret at least wanted him to order Brederode out of Amsterdam. She no longer had any doubts about being able to control the situation in Holland, although she would rather avoid violence and expense.[16]

In Margaret's view, the evil had ceased, for even sermons had stopped. She pointed out with pride at how little bloodshed her pacification had required, and cautioned the king about causing a civil war with a large and expensive force of aggressive foreign troops. The people who had served her would feel mortified if they saw that their hard work did not content him. They had joined with her in achieving the finest victory available in civil strife: resolution without destruction. She wanted Philip to abandon his expensive enterprise and resolve all differences by means of truly "politique" ways and stratagems.[17] She also noted the new divisions among members of the Golden Fleece, with many among them refusing to follow the example of Orange. Egmont had renewed his oath to church and king, and Hoorn had come to court to offer both oath and renewed service. He apologized to Margaret for his past remarks against her, attributing them to passion and

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[15] Ibid., 2: 337–338. Margaret to Philip, 12 Apr. 1567; Le Boucq, *Histoire des troubles*, 23–25; P.C. Hooft, *Nederlandse historien in het Kort* (Antwerp: 1978), 56–60.

[16] *Correspondance . . . Orange*, 2: 357–372. Letters concerning the withdrawal of Orange, 10–30 Apr. 1567.

[17] *Correspondance française*, 2: 337–343. Margaret to Philip, 12 Apr. 1567.

discontent. She allowed him back at court, but temporized on his request for renewed duties in the government.[18]

Even Megen became optimistic after he saw a loss of courage among the Confederates in Vianen and Amsterdam. Calvinists became despondent when they saw the Confederates, both gentlemen and bourgeoisie, bargaining for a pardon in exchange for ousting preachers from the towns. Money ceased to flow into the Calvinist coffers, and Brederode's troops needed pay. The threat of force now rested in Margaret's hands and Megen encouraged her to write to recalcitrant towns about how she could send Noircarmes to teach them to talk politely if they continued to reject her orders. When the Confederates withdrew from Bois-le-Duc without a shot being fired, Megen said that he worried that all the rotten, greasy, unctuous, and slippery birds had taken flight, leaving behind only the weak to be punished.[19]

A confident Margaret wrote to Alva saying that the entire land enjoyed repose, sermons had ceased, and consistories had dissolved. She thought that the news might make him change some of his requests for levies of German troops. Her claims did not represent fact in every case. The Confederate force in Vianen remained and when it withdrew and marched to Amsterdam, it sacked churches along the entire route. Megen wanted to pursue them, but needed orders from Margaret, who put her hopes on the magistrates of Amsterdam not wanting any part of the force from Vianen, for it could have dire consequences for such a city. Megen himself knew of the fears of Amsterdam and moved to prevent the Confederates from entering. Acting on his own initiative, he played a hide-and seek-game with the Confederates on the dikes of Holland. In Megen's words, when he captured one he attached him to the nearest tree and vowed to do so for the whole group. Likewise, he warned Amsterdam that he had twenty pieces of artillery and that the magistrates must ask for an appointment with Margaret or he would shell the city. Both acts caused a furor and as he drew near, some Confederate sympathizers sallied forth to attack, causing Megen to ask the magistrates if Amsterdam had declared war.[20]

Only too pleased with his acts, Margaret sent Noircarmes to Holland to assist in bringing the entire affair to a conclusion. She herself made a formal visit to Antwerp during the first days of May 1567. She rejoiced in

[18] Ibid., 3: 235–236. Margaret to Philip, 14 Apr. 1567.
[19] *Briefwisseling*, 497–514. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 12–22 Apr. 1567.
[20] Ibid., 515–526. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 23 Apr.–3 May 1567.

the reversal of Antwerp's fortunes and regarded it as the prize in her pacification plan, since no city had been more dangerous to her regime. The largest and richest city in the Netherlands, Antwerp by itself constituted a power to be reckoned with and its magistrates had been formidable opponents. When she could write to Philip from Antwerp that the only sermons heard throughout the Netherlands came from Catholic clerics, she welcomed the change as a break in the endless series of vexing reports that she had sent during the previous year. She had entered Antwerp on April 23 with all of her retinue and immediately went to the cathedral to offer thanks that the city had not suffered ruin in the course of restoration to proper rule and religion. She acknowledged the many good citizens who remained to greet her, but knew others had fled. Greater numbers would do so if the resolution that she sought failed to be forthcoming. There, as in other cities that returned to obedience, Margaret condemned the injustice and impertinence of those who had interrupted proper political and religious processes. The cities, in her opinion, had to beg for mercy, which she wanted Philip to grant, and thereafter the leaders should submit to due punishment. She regarded the example of Noircarmes's dealing with Maastricht as noteworthy. He put the city under his own garrison, took its weapons and keys, disarmed all citizens, and strangled the man responsible for organizing resistance. She wanted to be equally stern with Brederode and his following in Vianen and Amsterdam, for perhaps acting on his own and perhaps not, he had instigated a multitude of troubles. Brederode had asked for permission to submit, but with conditions that she refused, especially since his force continued to be a threat around Amsterdam.[21]

In correspondence with Alva, Margaret candidly told him that force had decided the issue, thwarting evil that could return if the regime reduced garrisons. The soldiers made people live in "fear and tranquility" and had to remain until pacification agreements gave way to full resolution of all problems. She had virtually completed her pacification plan, but the effects of the insurrection in limiting commerce and of the troops in consuming the wealth of the land continued. She feared reaching a point at which the regime could only pay troops through confiscations, marking a breakdown of proper political order. She relayed the same message to Philip in a cautionary letter. Not anticipating Alva's purpose, she thought it best to warn Philip that remedy had to come from him, for Alva was only another

[21] *Correspondance française*, 2: 348–352. Margaret to Philip, 1 May 1567.

regent, such as herself. Of course she did not know that Philip had no intention of entering into discussions or of reaching an accord or compromise. To him, sending a military figure like Alva seemed perfectly logical, but it was repellant to Margaret's mind. She never wavered in her belief that councils and discussion, joined with good administration and justice, could resolve all problems. The recurring refrain of her letters centered on how unnecessary a large force had become. She did recommend the construction of citadels in the more obstreperous cities, for the one in Tournai had worked wonders. Such fortifications became the sole adjustment to existing forces that Margaret deemed necessary.[22]

While she stayed in Antwerp, the only remaining action occurred in Holland where Noircarmes and Megen confronted the remaining Confederates commanded by the newly panicked Brederode. The terrain limited military activity and forces had to maneuver carefully along roads and dikes. The Confederates, well equipped with boats, moved more easily than Megen and Noircarmes, who had none, and the *waterschepen*, the local authorities who controlled the waterways, did not hasten to them with furnish any. Noircarmes finally arrived at Gouda and moved quickly to Haarlem, which gave Amsterdam's magistrates a sudden desire to come to terms. The Confederates and Brederode fled in great disorder and Margaret gave her captains orders to inflict as much pain on them as possible. Megen did his best, but had to report from Arnhem that most of the force had successfully vanished when he arrived. He took pleasure in reporting the panic occasioned when the trumpeter sounded his arrival, for even though his men remained far away the Confederates threw down their arms, broke ranks and ran here and there. To Megen, that panic signaled the end of the war. The days when the Confederate forces dominated had passed, but financial difficulties remained. Margaret had trouble paying the soldiers, and Noircarmes and Megen both had to report episodes in which their troops pillaged the countryside in search of food. Nevertheless, the work of pacification continued.[23]

The Confederates, disorganized and in flight, offered no resistance. Magistrates who had allowed Calvinist or Confederate activity faced dismissal, but Margaret acted with restraint in areas where open rebellion had been averted, particularly in Amsterdam. She asked Megen to assist her in appointing "a person of quality" as governor of Holland. She wanted

[22] Ibid., 2: 355–357. Margaret to Philip, 3 May 1567.
[23] *Briefwisseling*, 526–544. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 4–8 May 1567.

Count Bossu to assume this task and to enter with a small garrison, taking the keys to the city and keeping them for a day. She wanted to restore traditional authority under strict supervision after removing those associated with the disorders. Since the Confederate designs to control the city had failed, Margaret wanted only a symbolic, well-mannered, Dutch-speaking military presence in Amsterdam with officers who cooperated with the magistrates. She suspected that the guilds had sponsored "innovations", but she did not want to tamper with one of the few remaining prosperous cities in the Netherlands.[24]

Noircarmes's reception in Amsterdam, which he reported as the friendliest and most Catholic in his recent experience, reinforced her confidence. Other cities that had flirted with insurrection, including Haarlem, Leiden, Delft, and Brill, quickly came to terms. Margaret, who sought to cleanse the entire maritime area of any remaining Calvinist presence, agreed and also wanted those captured by Megen brought promptly to justice. The numerous commoners in his custody should, she thought, suffer swift execution or exile to the galleys to avoid long imprisonment with the attendant dangers of escape or disorder. In each instance, Margaret issued strict regulations for the magistrates to follow in anticipating the ordinances of military rule. She made it clear that violations of the rules, particularly with respect to religion and public order, would occasion a far more difficult period of military occupation.[25]

When Deventer and Groningen asked for terms so that they could reform themselves in order to avoid the imposition of a garrison, she ordered Megen to put troops in anyway, reminding them how they had long ignored her entreaties to do what they now seemed eager to accomplish.[26] Megen then went from place to place, reordering laws and restructuring the magistrates. He also tried to involve the church. Margaret wished to rely heavily on the participation of churchmen, hoping they would inject vigor into their activities and not just resume services. However, the churchmen continued to demonstrate a remarkable inability to respond even when circumstances favored them. Other disappointments also troubled Margaret's search to reestablish order. She remained plagued by a shortage of money. The troops that had assisted in subduing every city from Tournai to Deventer had received only partial payment.

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[24] Ibid., 545–548. Letters of Margaret to Megen and Noircarmes, 10 May 1567.
[25] Ibid., 548–564. Letters of Megen, Noircarmes and Margaret 10–17 May 1567.
[26] *Correspondance française*, 3: 267–268. Letters of Margaret and Megen, 14–17 May 1567.

Political changes also thwarted Margaret. The king dispatched Tisnacq, a member of Margaret's councils before he joined the Spanish court, to the Netherlands to help prepare for Alva's government. He presented her with a number of royal commands, the most important of which was to say nothing specific about a pardon, but to encourage hope through amiable words. Philip wanted people to think themselves safe and to stay at work until Alva arrived and could deal with them. The king dismissed complaints about German troops and the lack of necessity for a large force, and he told her to begin demobilizing local companies, ostensibly so the soldiers could return to proper trades.[27] Margaret also began to receive letters from Alva in late May in which he made it clear that he wanted German soldiers, and plenty of them. He brusquely told her to find a way to pay them.[28]

Her reasoned approach remained at variance with those of both Alva and the king. She spoke with warmth of the end of Brederode's adventure, relating how he and his troops took flight, leaving the magistrates of towns that had collaborated confused and scrambling to come to terms with her. She knew the fate of the aristocrats and could control the magistrates, but openly wondered about the private lives of ordinary people. She feared the "strange words" still heard in the public places of cities ruled through intimidation, which reinforced her view that garrisons represented only part of the answer. Force had to be joined with political change, and she remained wary about the hopes of commoners, even though she tried to protect them from royal vengeance. Margaret reminded Philip that if he struck down all those people who had participated in the disorders in a city like Antwerp, he would devastate the place, driving away or killing the largest portion of the people. Already she saw people in flight making up great columns along the roads. Some groups seemed large enough to populate a town, and they all headed for France, Germany, and England.

To Margaret, if half the people faced flight or the executioner, the immediate loss would be huge and gruesome, and the future of previously rich provinces would become bleak. Those most responsible for the insurrection had fled first, leaving only people of secondary importance for her to arrest. The least significant followers of the new religion crowded the prisons. Their dismay joined that of the subjects who remained good but who faced a future of hardship and expense because of garrisons. She wanted

[27] Ibid., 3: 273–275. Philip to Tisnacq, 13 May 1567.
[28] Ibid., 3: 284–285. Alva to Margaret, 25 May 1567.

to advance a positive plan that would resolve the problem. Soldiers had little capacity to remedy religious strife and she did not regard force as a permanent remedy. Intimidation only perpetuated the problem by serving as a constant irritant that caused the people to dislike the government.[29]

She could not have offered a better prediction to the king, but, as with every other suggestion Margaret made, he ignored it in favor of his own interpretation of the godly work at hand. From Vienna, the emperor expressed concern to Margaret that Philip knew nothing of religious strife and might only make it worse, but she had few other allies.[30] Conscious therefore of both present and future dangers facing the provinces she cared so much about, Margaret continued to impose order. Present peace might avert future civil war. The collapse of opposition in Deventer essentially completed Margaret's program and she only had to see to the management of affairs while awaiting the Duke of Alva. That put her in a contradictory position, one of seeking to maintain peace even as she knew that her policy had been repudiated and that she merely prepared all the Netherlands for a military occupation far more harsh than anything she had desired. From its inception, her plan tried to blend force with law and to respect the essential organization of society, a policy in keeping with her concept of the duties of a regent.[31]

In Tournai, Valenciennes, and Antwerp, she had practiced aggression within the bounds of reason. A military government had instituted punitive measures that severely limited traditional city governance and punished participants in the insurrection with the utmost rigor. For example, in Valenciennes the two captive preachers suffered interrogation under torture and then hanging, while she ordered the beheading of three others who had led the armed resistance. Guy de Brès, one of the preachers, turned his execution into an opportunity to moralize against rebellion, offering his death as a testimony to God's dislike of deviation from obedience to kings and magistrates.[32] In Tournai, commissioners appointed to interrogate those who had remained in the city concluded their work with a series of executions on the scaffold constructed with wood ripped from the Calvinist temple.[33] All of these events occurred without disorder and the investigation itself tended to diminish the Calvinist threat that had

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[29] Ibid., 2: 360–365. Margaret to Philip, 24 May 1567.
[30] Ibid., 3: 255. Chantonay to Margaret from the Imperial Court at Prague, 3 Apr. 1567.
[31] Iongh, *Madama*, 340–343.
[32] *BCRH*, 8: 59–60. Report from Valenciennes, 1 June 1567.
[33] Soldoyer, *Mémoires*, pp. 255–260.

seemed so great a few months earlier. The Calvinist force in Valenciennes turned out to be a rag-tag group of poor men dubbed the naked army by those who investigated it. In Tournai, authorities compelled people who had followed the new faith but who had not rebelled to live as Catholics. All had to attend Catholic services, and Margaret's representatives did not want for informants if Calvinists lapsed in attendance.[34]

Such steps seemed revolutionary in comparison with the traditions that had guided her government prior to the Calvinist insurrection. She regarded her actions as rigorous and punitive and understandably became upset with Philip's silence on the subject. Never having had sympathy with the Calvinist leadership, Margaret felt justified in carrying out a number of executions, but she never thought that death should become the only available punishment. Philip's silence and his indifference to her accomplishments clearly indicated that he thought her labors had been insufficient. Her willingness to work with local authorities continued to taint her. While such policies earned her praise from those who helped her to govern, they attracted the abuse of the new servants of the king in the provinces. The Spanish bishop of Cuenca, a recent arrival, complained of Margaret's moderation in Antwerp. To the bishop, anyone even vaguely associated with Calvinism became a heretic and had to receive harsh punishment to prevent the spread of liberty of conscience, a dreaded state of mind to him. He wanted to sweep out all local judges because they had failed to be rigorous in the past. In his Christian commonwealth, any deviation amounted to conspiracy against the faith, making punishment a necessity to avoid spreading contempt for the church. Even those who did not attack the church directly violated their duties to the king and "raison d'État" required their punishment.[35] The bishop emphasized that God required strict policing of the church by princes, and Margaret's pacification of Antwerp put Philip in violation of his duty. Thus, in the opinion of Philip's new servants, Margaret barely escaped being an accomplice to the seditious, devilish deeds in the provinces.

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[34] EA 353, fo. 251–256. Reports from magistrates and commissioners in Tournai, Apr.–June 1567; EA 244.5, pieces 42–80. Letters of Margaret and her officers in Tournai, Apr.–July 1567; Pasquier de le Barre, *The Time of Troubles in the Low Countries: The Chronicles and Memoirs of Pasquier de le Barre of Tournai, 1559–1567*, C. Steen tr. and ed. (New York: 1989), 127–132.

[35] *Correspondance française*, 3: 294–296. Annotations of the Bishop of Cuenca, 1567.

2. *Royal Intransigence*

Alva marched north with an equally firm sense of duty, confident in the righteousness of the cause. His letters to Margaret expressed cold hostility while hers became passionate as she tried to convince him that great force had become unnecessary. He only responded that he planned to be as moderate as his charge allowed.[36] Meanwhile, her captains continued the task of disarming suspect towns and cities and interrogating citizens, both tasks that served Alva's interests well. The disarming was often pointless. Megen contemptuously said he was sorting through the goods of "rabble," taking old or useless weapons from worthless people. His list of weapons seized included mostly the castoffs of soldiers or homemade blades and cudgels. The good weapons had been carried out of the towns by the wealthy and well-placed Calvinists, who had the most to fear from his occupation.[37]

As Alva drew closer on the Spanish Road, Philip became less guarded in his statements to Margaret. He responded to her query about a pardon by ordering her to keep all prisoners under close guard and to strip all "bad" cities of their privileges pending his arrival. To counter the tendency of the people to flee, Philip told her to announce that he would issue a pardon, or she could use any other expedient to keep them in place. As for her claim to have restored affairs to good order, Philip simply said that not everything had been done and completion of the task would have to await Alva's arrival. He also reiterated his orders to disband local bands of soldiers, continuing to claim that they had come from the crafts and trades and thus ought to return to them.[38] All matters of importance had to await Alva and he refused to consider modifying his orders to the duke, preferring to let his charge run its course. He thus left Margaret with what amounted to suspended duties, a fact not lost on the people of the Netherlands, and with no money, which caused her to curtail the use of troops even at the height of her success.

Apprehensive about Philip's intentions, people fled. She had long felt that a true remedy had to include bringing all those responsible for the insurrection to justice, and she regretted that Philip negated the process. Indeed, she thought it scandalous that justice had to wait and that new

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[36] Ibid., 3: 304–307. Letters 12–24 June 1567.

[37] *Briefwisseling*, 573–576. Megen to Margaret, 17–23 June 1567.

[38] *Correspondance française*, 2: 370–375 and 3: 270–272. Letters of Philip to Margaret, 31 May 1567.

trouble between townspeople and unpaid soldiers seemed ready to break out. She met with a group of officials sent by Alva to prepare matters for him and they refused to disburse money for troops, keeping the funds they had for the duke's men and claiming to act under his specific orders. That augmented what she regarded as a hateful state of suspense and dread worse than the terror spread by trials in occupied cities.[39] Unpaid soldiers, always murmuring and often berating her directly, preyed on her mind, appearing as dangerous as the Calvinists and Confederates. As one expedient, Margaret and the members of the Council of State seized on the opportunity presented by the death, effectively imprisoned but of natural causes, of the Marquis of Berghes, to distribute his lands and offices to the captains who had served her. However, everyone, including the king, wanted some of the property. The small amounts involved did not offer much fiscal relief, especially when compared with the degradation and disgrace involved in the proceedings. Irritated, Philip dismissed requests for funds and put her on the defensive by repeating the denunciations of the bishop of Cuenca. He also denounced her accord with Antwerp as indecent and offensive to God and he revoked it out of hand. Using that as an excuse, Philip ordered Margaret to cease all independent operations with regard to pacification, claiming that he would himself see to all things necessary for the service of God.[40]

The king remained indifferent to the plight of Margaret's troops since the German levies awaiting Alva in Luxembourg would replace them in the cities and fortifications. One order commanded her to raise twenty-two companies, more than Noircarmes had used in all of his efforts. She became reduced to begging Alva to reconsider having such masses of troops, since even the smaller number she employed consumed all available money and she foresaw the ruin of the land. The mustering of forces in Luxembourg would bring disaster to a place that had remained loyal to the crown and true to the faith. She expressed amazement at his refusal to consider the circumstances of the land, a refrain in her letters for months following.[41] Incredulous over Alva's insistence on arriving at the head of a full army, Margaret began, with great dismay, to disband local regiments, breaking up the units and sending them home with only a fraction of the

[39] Ibid., 2: 377–380. Margaret to Philip, 17 June 1567.

[40] Ibid., 3: 281–282 and 381–384. Margaret to Philip, 17 June 1567 and Philip to Margaret, 30 June 1567.

[41] Ibid., 3: 286–289 and 309–311. Margaret to Alva, 6 June, 2 July, and 6 July 1567 and Alva's response 10 July 1567.

pay due them. In what amounted to a grim foretaste of what the future held, the German troops replaced local soldiers even before Alva arrived, and he had ordered that they be quartered in towns that had not participated in the insurrection. Thus Margaret, once again carrying out the more loathsome tasks of the king, had to punish prior loyalty to court, crown, and church.

In the pragmatic, callous attitude of Alva, Margaret saw only meanness and anger and a future in which the good and the bad received identical treatment. The policy made sense only if all agreed that the entire people of the Netherlands shared collective responsibility for the insurrection, an idea that Margaret rejected out of hand. She also resented the attitude of the agents sent ahead by Alva, for they offended everyone at court by insisting that there was no need to discuss the duke's orders. They expected automatic obedience to every command. All of the fears about the nature of Spanish absolutism that had been raised first over Granvelle returned as Philip's coldness toward his subjects took form in the character of Alva. Margaret had to assist Alva and his agents, but she let everyone know that she followed orders reluctantly and she admonished the king that she regretted having such business charged to her government.[42]

Those close to Philip's court who represented Margaret joined in her pleas for a more moderate stand. At first obliquely, and then more openly, Tisnacq questioned the wisdom of Philip's decisions.[43] He argued that adopting a hard line on every single problem would lead to "sinister interpretations" of all his undertakings, and the counselor naively claimed that the king could not impose his opinions on everyone. Nor should Philip mortify Margaret by a blanket rejection of her work. In addition, he compared the king to a doctor who misdiagnosed a patient and should reconsider his plan of treatment, a brave statement from someone at Philip's court. For her own part, Margaret built her case slowly and carefully, even though she anticipated a royal rebuke before she actually received it. She mistakenly advocated a reasoned response in an unreasonable environment. She had already covered the ground in her appeals to Alva, but those arguments concerned proper strategy and efficiency in the use of force. To Philip, Margaret directed appeals based on the requirements of justice and the proper fulfillment of office. Every city and person in the Netherlands

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[42] W. Maltby, *Alba: A Biography of Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Third Duke of Alba, 1507–1582* (Berkeley: 1983), 142–145.

[43] EA 207, fo. 159–164. Correspondence between Tisnacq and Philip II, 26–30 June 1567.

deserved justice, and she took it for granted that he would be interested in adherence to proper procedures. She had conquered Valenciennes in his name and admitted that he could do with it what he pleased, but the other cities had submitted without force and she had indicated the king's willingness to practice clemency and grace in each case. Margaret also insisted on making distinctions among prisoners in terms of their quality and the nature of their crimes. Moreover, she needed to bargain in places where pacification remained unstable, as in Antwerp and Amsterdam. Philip's plans severely limited her ability to negotiate, and the certainty of repression implicit in his refusal to compromise made the situation desperate. She also spoke for the many young prisoners who had mixed in religious disorder and iconoclasm through indiscretion and impudence, not malice or belief. Margaret felt that they ought not to die or become galley slaves. She resisted the orders of the king's commissioners who had arrived and demanded that the number of convictions quickly satisfy the need for galley slaves in the fleet. She dreaded what would happen if such orders became common knowledge.[44]

Likewise, Margaret would like to have hidden Philip's rejection of her pacification efforts.

> As for the edict I had published against disorders and irreverence, I was overwhelmed, astonished and grieved, as was the Council, to see the discontent of Your Majesty who suddenly resolved to revoke it without hearing or wishing to hear the just and necessary reasons that caused us, yea forced us, to make it for the honor of God, the good and profit of the Roman Catholic religion, the service of Your Majesty, and the repose and tranquility of Antwerp and generally all of the Netherlands. We feel still worse when we consider your finding evil a thing done after considerable deliberation in Council where it was seen as such a good conclusion that all thought it would please you as a means of beginning to remedy the disorders, something that cannot be done all at once, but only by mutual agreement and step by step.[45]

Margaret also abhorred the references by the bishop of Cuenca that placed her and her advisors in the camp of heresy. Her hope that the bishop prepared the document on the basis of error faded when she came to realize he had issued it as part of a policy to discredit as well as to dismiss her and all who served her. She asked him to judge her in the light of her intentions and reasoning. The knowledge of how much had transpired during

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[44] *Correspondance française*, 2: 385–393. Margaret to Philip, 13 July 1567.
[45] Ibid., 2: 401. Margaret to Philip, 30 July 1567.

the insurrection haunted her, for virtually everyone shared collective guilt and could suffer execution for religious transgressions. The need to differentiate between various degrees of involvement occupied the heart of her policy and attitude. She dismissed collective responsibility, insisting on the existence of distinctions between the seducers and the seduced. Fire and sword could not deal with the problem and canon and civil law both called for penalties being commensurate with crimes. She tried to shock the king by claiming that 300,000 people had violated the religious edicts in one fashion or another. Margaret could not conceive that anyone would even consider carrying out executions on a massive scale. The rule of law and reason ought to prevent him from killing or making refugees of half the population; such a massacre would not benefit either religion or his service.

In addition, Margaret expressed disgust with the language that the bishop had used to condemn her. Nothing she did seemed satisfactory, and Cuenca even accused her of favoring heretics by hanging them. She defended the executions, saying that in a tumultuous and riotous time death sentences had to be quick and unceremonious. She also knew that the Calvinists detested hanging as a punishment fit only for thieves and robbers. However, she had to live with Philip's orders despite their meaning for her personally and for the whole of the Netherlands. Margaret candidly wrote that she did not know whether the repudiation of pacification or the dismissal of local troops would occasion the greater division and disorder.[46]

In effect, she worried about delivering the people to the executioner, an act as unjust and arbitrary as any perpetrated by the Calvinists. Suddenly, Megen and Noircarmes had to reverse their policies, carrying out orders in cities they had reduced that contradicted all their previous achievements. Carefully planned local arrangements became null and loyal local troops were unwillingly mustered out, furious to see foreign mercenaries replace them. Noircarmes feared placing German troops in Valenciennes, partly because many of them openly practiced Lutheranism, and he expressed astonishment at having to dismiss the soldiers who had secured the victory in the first place. He also felt that the partly corrupt and wholly desperate people would see in the entry of German troops evil intentions on the part of the government, which he of course dismissed as a false fear. Margaret, who offered no opinion on any of Noircarmes's remarks, simply

[46] Ibid., 2: 402–406. Margaret to Philip, 30 July 1567.

reiterated the orders, saying they came expressly from the king and had to be obeyed. He complied, but swore he would rather have been in a hundred rough battles than to have his troops regard him as they did then. Angry over their brusque discharge, the soldiers refused to leave unless they received some pay, and he had to divert money that she had sent for a different purpose. Even then, he had difficulty in avoiding conflict between the two forces as the German troops entered.[47]

In the north, Megen went about his work without interruption, sending Margaret news of the schemes of the remaining Confederates in Emden and relating his successes in reordering the towns in the area. He did complain that people became apprehensive about her plans, with some regarding talk of clemency as merely a way to lull them in to a false sense of security, deceiving them about the trap awaiting them. He asked about her intentions in terms of a pardon, and she had to answer that the king had reserved the right to act as he saw fit.[48] Megen had made no accords in her name, so the particulars of the revocation of the agreement in Antwerp, which she published at the same time, did not concern him. However, the step did alarm the towns and he did feel compelled to put affairs on a more military footing. The worries of the magistrates increased when Margaret, in an order that reflected her own changed circumstances, ordered the Grand Council of Malines to begin to act against people in Holland who had previously enjoyed the protection of privilege. The new regime advanced the idea that association with heresy involved people in *lèse-majesté divine* that automatically voided their privileges.[49]

The occupation of Tournai also became harsher. The commander dismissed the companies that had occupied the city since March, but they threatened to riot if they were not paid. Likewise the Germans sent to replace them had not been paid, leaving Jan de Croy, the new commander, scrambling for funds to feed them. The entire affair left him uneasy, and as he put it, in the midst of foreigners and people of a different religion.[50] He had labored to bring order to affairs and to begin the orderly administration of justice. De Croy had requested Margaret's opinion on various levels of culpability within the ranks of Tournai's Calvinist community.

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[47] Ibid., 3: 340–343. Letters of Noircarmes and Margaret, 11–21 July 1567.

[48] *Briefwisseling*, 587–590. Letters of Megen and Margaret, 21–29 July 1567.

[49] *Correspondanc de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas* Gachard ed., 6 vols. (Brussels: 1848–1849), 2: 633. Letter of 12 June 1567.

[50] EA 353, fo. 270–272. Letters of de Croy and the Magistrates of Tournai, 29 July 1567; *Correspondance française*, 3: 343. Letter of de Croy to Margaret.

Since she regarded the city and its consistory as among the most notorious, she did not hesitate in ordering the execution of leaders. However, the numbers of those who had simply followed along during the Calvinist moment bothered her as never before. These seemed precisely the people who in her opinion ought to benefit from a royal pardon after making some amends. Philip's repudiation of her policy had left the prospect of such a pardon remote, and she became unable to offer De Croy any advice on the subject.[51]

When she wrote to Hopperus and Tisnacq in Madrid, Margaret expressed her fears more openly. She remained stunned by Philip's attitude and blamed the faulty reasoning and perceptions found in the document attributed to the bishop of Cuenca. To her, the report and Philip's revocation of her orders showed little regard for the actual state of affairs in the Netherlands. She sent a full justification for her actions and tried to defend herself and the members of her councils, but she added nothing to the rationale that had long since been a part of her correspondence with the king and that had not moved him in the least. In any event, she obeyed Philip's direct orders and proclaimed the edict that put everything she had done on a provisional basis, suspending agreements of every sort until he arrived to see to matters himself.[52]

[51] *Correspondance française*, 3: 346–351. Memoir from de Croy on Tournai and Margaret's response, July 1567.

[52] Ibid., 3: 318 and 339–340. 23 and 30 July 1567.

CHAPTER TEN

DISGRACE, TORMENT, AND SHAME

1. *Resistance to Alva*

In the middle of August 1567, the Duke of Alva entered Brussels. Marching at the head of thousands of troops, he rejoiced in the military nature of his enterprise. The king had prepared Alva's instructions months before and, despite Margaret's frequent pleas, refused to modify the order to punish all the provinces for the crimes of heresy and rebellion. Alva arrived fully prepared for battle, but he occupied the Netherlands without incident and commenced implementation of his instructions without opposition. Margaret had already reduced the rebellious areas methodically, using her limited force to establish peace, not to impose a repressive regime, an omission in the view of the king. With the blessing of Philip II, Alva ignored the success of Margaret's pacification policy and, while he needed her help to establish his own regime and thus kept her in Brussels for several months, he made it clear that she remained in disgrace.[1]

Had Margaret known of the nature of Alva's direct and still secret instruction, she might have been loath to continue the services the duke required. Firmly grounded in the governing principles of the Netherlands, Margaret would have been shocked by the vision expressed in Philip's instruction. The king planned to force upon the Netherlands uniformity unprecedented in the governments of the time. His plan placed all subjects under the provisions of the same law, granted the church an active role in governance, stripped the cities, provinces, and aristocrats of their weapons, forbade councils and estates, imposed a new monetary standard, and created a navy under royal command. These objectives represented a formidable undertaking and required the total destruction of existing legal and governing forms and practices. In addition, the changes involved only the treatment of areas that had remained "good" in the view of the

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[1] Jane de Iongh, *Madama. Margaretha van oostenrijk Hertogin van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 345–347; G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini al Cosimo e Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1559 al 1577*, Battistine ed. (Rome: 1949), 299–300.

BRVSSEL
Fürst Alvanus gabr bebendt.
Das er allem das Regiment,
Im gantzem lande nicht erlangen
(Und morden alle gefangen).
Fürt er hinauß die Herzogin
Gewesene Gubernantin.
Auß Brussel er sie hie vergleit
Dis vielen frommen war sehr leide.
Anno Dñj M. D. LXVIII. In Augusto.

Fig. 5. Margaret of Parma leaving Brussels escorted by the Duke of Alva. Frans Hogenberg. Rijksmuseum.

regime. Philip and his councils had formulated more restrictive rules of governance to be put into effect to punish people who had rebelled or allowed rebellion. In all, the program was astonishing and had been drafted in 1566 when Philip was most infuriated with the Netherlands. While the king had no doubts about his goal of retribution and destruction, he never told Margaret about Alva's true mission even as it became known in court circles in Madrid.[2]

The instruction demonstrated the impatience of the king and his conviction that his regent had failed from want of applying herself. He obdurately

[2] *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas*, Gachard ed., 6 vols. (Brussels, 1848–1849), 2: 600, 619 and 626. Patents granting Alva extraordinary authority, Dec. 1566 and 31 Jan. 1567.

refused to consider any of Margaret's accomplishments and thus learned nothing from her experience. Indeed, he claimed that soft measures had failed against those who held God and his own ordinances in contempt and thus he ordered Alva to break and smash the people who had so offended him. He discounted every step she had undertaken; otherwise his plans for unnecessary military action would have appeared as too bald an admission of ruthless and vindictive behavior. Instead Philip deflected attention from her successes and concentrated on Margaret's failure to contain the Calvinists in the first place. However, in his instructions to his new regent, Philip tacitly acknowledged that he had greatly limited Margaret's powers, leaving her defenseless before the initial Calvinist insurrection. Correcting the problem, he granted Alva the authority to rationalize the government and its tax structure, and to impose proper order. In contrast, Margaret had lacked the funding and powers of compulsion, in part because in the king's eyes she had only modest political ability.[3]

During the difficult months that followed Alva's entry, Margaret ignored royal criticism. She became even more firm in her belief that Philip could only bring disaster to the provinces through his obstinate determination to punish areas already restored to obedience. She failed to realize the gulf between her views and those of the king and thus continued to plead with him in an effort to protect the Netherlands. Still officially in charge of the government, Margaret remained bound to report to Madrid, and her missives struck a sharply dissonant chord in a court that lacked the habit of critical discussion of policy. Indifferent to Philip's anger, Margaret repeatedly pointed out the efficacy of her previous policy and the work that her military commanders and commissioners had done in cities such as Tournai and Valenciennes. She felt no shame in admitting her reluctance to punish the followers of Calvinism and continued to argue that only the leaders of a movement merited exemplary punishment. Margaret's entire plan had rested firmly on a blend of compromise and force, starting with the Accord with the Confederates and continuing with particular agreements in each area. To her, they represented a sensible, moderate approach, but to Philip they indicated complicity in heresy and rebellion even though Margaret had used them as a device to calm and then subdue the troubles. He ignored, and Alva dismissed,

[3] W. Maltby, *Alba. A Biography of Francesco Alvarez de Toledo, Third Duke of Alba, 1507–1582* (Berkeley: 1983), 205–224; Henry Kamen, *The Duke of Alba* (New Haven: 2004), 81–105; G. Parker, *Philip II* (London: 1971), 75–78.

all of her efforts despite their willingness to take advantage of the fruits of her labor, which included masses of information on the troubles and large numbers of prisoners in the major cities.[4] Since he had repudiated Margaret's plea for a pardon and rejected her call for prompt judicial proceedings, Philip had left Margaret with the problem of housing thousands of prisoners who had submitted, in many cases because of her assurance that the king would be merciful. Since he had forbidden her to take any action, people remained incarcerated, or free in closed towns, existing in a state of suspense and dread, a cruel matter in her opinion and a mark of Philip's negligence. Although she hated to displease him, Margaret did not shrink from criticizing Philip for finding agreeable the policies and procedures that most harmed the land.[5]

Margaret also directly and bluntly denounced Alva's troops for delighting in smashing, wrecking, and eating everything in places like Brussels that had caused no problems. Their presence made the doubts of good subjects grow as Alva brought ruin to them, quartering his troops in the very places that had supported efforts to restore order. Prior loyalty and concern for the land merited nothing. The places Margaret deemed wicked, such as Antwerp and Bois-le-Duc, already had troops in place and Alva had no intention of placing his men in areas despoiled in previous encounters. Margaret added a caustic remark that the Walloon soldiers who had served her so well became bitter when they were dismissed in favor of German troops. Both new and old units of soldiers grew furious at the failure to pay them. Since Alva brought no funds and only added to the financial burden, she foresaw nothing but trouble in store for the provinces.

The instructions Alva showed to her also caused Margaret considerable distress because they named him Captain General as of the previous January even though they had been written in March of 1567. She felt that the retroactive appointment rendered suspect the legality of everything she had done since then. Alva's refusal to divulge all of his orders so that she could present them to the Council of State dismayed her equally.[6] He said that his orders would become apparent as circumstances and facts

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[4] C. Steen, *A Chronicle of Conflict: Tournai, 1559–1567* (Utrecht: 1985), 139–147.

[5] *Correspondance française*, 3: 406–409. Margaret to Philip, 19 Aug. 1567; Francesco Marchi, *Cento Lettere*, Ronchini ed. (Rome: 1867), 139–142.

[6] *Conseil des Troubles. Liste des condamnés, (1567–1573)*, A. Verheyden ed. (Brussels: 1961), 508–509. Secret Instruction for Alva; *Correspondance . . . Philippe II*, 2: 626–627. The King's letter giving Alva full power, 1 Mar. 1567.

required. As she spoke with him, the mercenaries raised in Sicily entered Brussels and he rejected her plea to remove the troops and spare the poor and loyal people of the city. The duke blandly told her that he could only act with orders from the king. Clearly his presence unnerved her and his words did nothing to clear away her doubts. Reason, she said, made her realize that duty dictated her continued service; the king had given Alva all authority and thus she had to obey him. Margaret did not hide her feeling of distaste at the changes Alva brought, and it remained hateful to her to see matters she had initiated left unresolved. Alva had no orders concerning a pardon, an omission ensuring that both good and bad subjects would suffer, causing all people to grow suspicious and fearful. Margaret noted that pamphlets began to appear complaining of the regime and relating it to the inquisition.[7] As Alva's rejection of her plan and program became common knowledge, people feared that what had been a rigorous policy would give way to one of reprisals.[8]

In September, Alva arrested Egmont and Hoorn, an act that shocked and grieved, in Margaret's opinion, all who heard of it. Part of the accusation against them stemmed from their participation in her pacification policy, which caused her considerable chagrin. She resented the deed and Alva's desire to involve her in similar acts. Philip and Alva had actually planned to imprison many more members of the Order, and the king had granted the duke the right to arrest, interrogate, prosecute, and execute any member. To facilitate the operation, Philip had made Alva a member of the Order.[9] However, most members proved more cautious than the unfortunate Egmont and Hoorn. Their interrogation and trial became a difficult matter for Margaret. To her they seemed unlikely victims, if only because of their station in life, a view obviously shared by the two since they had remained in Brussels after Alva's arrival. They, along with other members of the Golden Fleece the duke hoped to ensnare, had caused Margaret little but political grief in her efforts to govern, but they had acted to avert the eruption of religious war in the land in August 1566.

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[7] *Correspondance française*, 3: 409–411. Margaret to Philip and petitions of various towns, 29 Aug. 1567.

[8] *Conseil des Troubles*, 547–549. Review of confiscations of property made by Margaret prior to the arrival of Alva.

[9] *Correspondance . . . Philippe II*, 2: 630. Warrant allowing Alva to proceed against the Golden Fleece, 24 Mar. 1567.

They also had a significant part in a system that she valued, even if she disliked the individual personalities involved.[10]

The interrogation of Egmont and Hoorn revealed much about Philip II and Alva. Egmont had to admit that he owed obedience to the king as a feudal lord and that the offices he held bound him to the monarch. The questions did not explore the possibility that the obligations might have had a mutual character. Instead, Egmont had to defend his objections to the policies and personality of Granvelle. The interrogations readily turned opposition into conspiracy, recasting dislike of the cardinal into treason and pleasure taken in his departure into an effort to usurp authority. In the king's view, by associating with other members of the Golden Fleece in expressing concerns over the placards and the inquisition, Egmont and Hoorn had clearly expressed sympathy for heresy that then affected the work of the Council of State. Their refusal to counter the Confederates also became a step toward linking them with every type of conspiracy, both real and imaginary. Rumors of plots to seize Antwerp or Utrecht became facts, and the existence of field sermons in the provinces in their charge became an admission of giving personal permission for them. Egmont equivocated on many questions concerning his view of the placards and he claimed that necessity dictated many of the things he did and much of the advice he offered during the troubled months of 1566. Egmont protested that Margaret knew of everything he had done and that dissimulation had become government policy in the absence of power. His interrogators, as Margaret feared they might, twisted Egmont's implementation of her directives until they became associated with the problems they attempted to address. Egmont reacted to the facts of the time and not to any ideology. His best answer to many questions referred to the factions, tumult, and lack of confidence characteristic of the whole of 1566 as the basis for all his thinking and activity. None of his answers satisfied his accusers and both he and Hoorn ultimately stopped participating in the inquiry. The court, astounded by a trial so alien to traditional legal processes, speculated on whether Alva would send the two counts to Spain or simply kill them on the spot.[11]

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[10] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 300–301; P.C. Hooft, *Nederlands historien in het Kort* (Antwerp: 1978), 60–72.

[11] *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche, Duchesse de Parme avec Philippe II*, Reiffenberg ed., (Brussels: 1842), 303–349. Record of the interrogations of Egmont and Hoorn, 12–17 Nov. 1567; Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 302–303.

Alva made no distinctions between great aristocrats and commoners in the harsh measures he used in interrogation. Moreover, he expected people to accept the necessity of his undertaking. When Alva arrested Antoine de Straelen, the burgomaster of Antwerp, after calling him in for a conference, he claimed to be astounded that the people of Antwerp expressed fear and outrage and began to flee. He wanted Margaret to write to the magistrates to calm their fears by telling them that he arrested Straelen merely as a device to enable him to determine the truth, and that the king would employ his customary clemency. Since she could not refuse his commands, Margaret complied, but she knew the words seemed hollow and that clemency had come to mean the headsman. However, the letter gave an indication of her situation. Alva insisted that she maintain the government in its customary pattern, meeting with councils and corresponding with the provinces and cities even though she had no authority. She publicly endorsed proceedings that Alva instituted while she privately condemned them and discussed the continued flight of people from the provinces. Petitions poured into her court from magistrates in towns that had assisted her in 1566 and now suffered under Alva. She did nothing, having recognized the futility of protesting anything to the duke.[12] Through her secretary in Madrid, Machiavelli, Margaret frankly expressed her dismay and indignation over Alva. Her accomplishments had meant nothing, for he had hardened his heart and was determined to put into effect practices unacceptable to her.[13]

The worst thing that occurred for Margaret came when Alva organized a new council to investigate the insurrection. Named the Council of Troubles, it instantly opened entire new areas of interrogation and became a symbol of repression unlike anything the Netherlands had experienced before. The dimensions of Philip II's hostility only became known in their true form through the activities of the new council. Its agents interrogated without restraint and made free use of the documents Margaret had gathered as evidence in her far more benign proceedings. The cloudy days of 1566 offered ample opportunity in 1567 for accusations of guilt by association or even by implication. A trail of evidence led to Louis of Nassau, to Orange, and to any other aristocrats who had ventured near the Calvinists or assisted in the organization of the Confederates. Participation in forging the accords Margaret had commissioned required them to negotiate

[12] *Correspondance française*, 3: 411–414. Margaret to Philip, 11 Sept. 1567.
[13] R. Lefevre, *Madama. Margerita d'Autriche (1522–1586)* (Rome: 1986), 237–238.

with the Calvinists, which compromised all of them in the eyes of the king. The uncertainty and fear of one year proved lethal in the next for those who tried to ensure calm and stability. Through its assiduous prosecutions and widespread executions, the Council of Troubles earned the name the Council of Blood, and it became the most awful symbol of Alva and his royal master. The council reopened cases that had previously been settled, most often to the detriment of the defendants. Material gathered in the investigations conducted by Margaret's commissioners and those appointed under her military governors suddenly came to be used as the basis for wholesale indictments. What had passed for minor transgressions under Margaret became capital offenses in the new order.[14]

Alva's new servants did not all come from the ranks of the Spaniards who accompanied him. Some of the men who had been Margaret's chief support in suppressing the troubles failed to resist the temptation to persecute. Noircarmes and Berlaymont became members of the Council of Troubles, joining a number of others chosen from local councils.[15] Many, like Noircarmes, had first entered the government with Cardinal Granvelle, but they attached their loyalty to the regime and not to the man. Changing masters to join the council under Alva became as simple as joining Margaret's government after the cardinal's departure. New to positions of power, they owed all to the government and they never hesitated in accommodating their views to the political creed that arrived as part of Alva's baggage. Interrogation and torture, some of which seemed extraordinarily inventive, became a device that changed the government as much as it punished heresy. Moreover, the council claimed prerogatives over land and titles that no court had ever before dared to advance. Aristocrats who had joined the Confederates for political reasons had their lands and wealth taken, and only the Spanish and those who served them benefitted. The trials also departed from every judicial tradition. Egmont and Hoorn demanded a trial before their peers in the Golden Fleece and refused to participate further when Alva declined. As a consequence, the council accepted their indictment as a confession because of their silence and Alva ordered their execution in 1568. The council at least spared them the worst torture and interrogation that most people suffered.

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[14] Maltby, *Alba*, 153–158; *Conseil des Troubles*, 550–571 for documents relating to the ensuing debate over justice.

[15] *Conseil des Troubles*, 543–549.

After the Council of Troubles accomplished the successful attack on the available members of the Golden Fleece, it turned on the magistrates who had not been sufficiently vigorous in their opposition to Calvinism or who had been too friendly with the Confederates. This became a matter of deep concern for Margaret since she had ordered magistrates to collaborate with members of the Order and others associated with the Confederates to quell disorders following the iconoclasm in 1566. Philip II had in effect repudiated all that Margaret had done, leaving numbers of otherwise loyal people subject to accusations of sedition and treason. While Margaret herself had practiced such duplicity on a limited basis, the far more general assault by Alva troubled her. Following the pacification, she had ordered a full inquiry into the insurrection and commissions accompanied garrisons into the troubled areas. For the first time, the commissioners had the authority to conduct a true inquiry and they prepared thorough reports. The commission in Tournai did exemplary work, and their report described in great detail the growth and influence of Calvinism. Margaret had wanted to use the information to arrest the leaders of the movement, but Alva simply accepted inclusion of a person in the report as evidence of complicity if not guilt, thus greatly expanding the number of suspects. Margaret's efforts at investigation and documentation proved to be a disaster for those named, even in passing, in the report.[16]

One of the more important documents Margaret furnished to Alva resulted from finding the letters and other papers of Giles Le Clerc, the secretary for the Confederates. All of the plans and hopes of both the Calvinists and the aristocracy emerged as Margaret had her agents prepare a summary of the material. Hopes for a unified reformed church with one confession and plans to convince Philip of the validity of both the aristocratic and religious causes filled the documents. The plans for the presentation of the petition to Margaret in April and the subsequent meeting of the Confederates at St. Trond in July 1566 seemed to involve every member of the Order, if only indirectly. The ministers of the new religion had bragged about having sympathetic contacts with all of the important members of the Order, and Le Clerc's documents supported some of their claims. To Alva's uncritical eyes, the boasts served to indict everyone, but especially Orange.[17]

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[16] *Mémoires de Pasquier de le Barre et de Nicholas Soldoyer*, Pinchart ed., 2 vols. (Brussels: 1859–1865), 2: 174–219. Report of the Commissioners in Tournai, 20 Feb. 1567.

[17] *Correspondance française*, 3: 319–329. Summary of documents relating to the troubles "des Pays d'Ambas."

Moreover, the duke reserved final judgment in all cases for himself, fearing that even hand-picked judges might insist on proof against those accused. Alva freely admitted that Philip subscribed to rules of statecraft quite different from the laws and practices of the Netherlands. Thus he delighted in hastening procedures or in reopening cases, spreading fear in the process.[18] In Tournai and other cities where Margaret had forced dramatic changes in early 1567, the pace of executions quickened and the relationship between citizens and occupying forces deteriorated dramatically. Cavalry patrolled the streets at night, outrages committed against civilians had to go unanswered, and the movement of people became restricted even within city walls. Large numbers of citizens fled, but patrols along the roads and canals resulted in the capture of many refugees. In one instance, Pasquier de le Barre, a former magistrate of Tournai, fell into Alva's hands as he attempted flight by ship and his memoirs became the evidence brought to bear against him. The Council of Troubles ordered his execution along with those of hundreds of others from Flanders and the Tournaisis.[19]

As bitter relationships became more common, Margaret also had to share in the task of acting for Philip in his efforts to seize the property of accused people, including reappraising the case of the now dead Marquis of Berghes. The king insisted that a court would have found Berghes guilty of participating in the negotiations in 1566, newly reconsidered an act of treason and a reason for declaring his property forfeit. In the Council of State, Margaret and the remnants of her government discussed his plans and reversed their previous decision to seize the property. Perhaps as a rebuke to Alva, they determined that "under the provisions of law, reason and justice" there was no cause to interrupt normal succession. Moreover, Margaret reminded Philip that should he decide to try the deceased Berghes for heresy and treason, it had to be according to the law of the Netherlands and before a court of his peers—members of the Order of the Golden Fleece. She also asked him why he castigated the dead, building a case against Berghes based solely on association, when so many living people had obviously instigated the insurrection.[20]

Philip ignored her, and his real concern remained the business undertaken by Alva. Margaret became simply a necessary nuisance. She continued

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[18] Maltby, *Alba*, 154.
[19] Soldoyer, *Mémoires*, 2: 272–278.
[20] *Correspondance française*, 3: 414–416. Margaret to Philip, 11 Sept. 1567.

to write, admitting that she might only be incurring his displeasure, but feeling she still had a duty to speak for the provinces. Her words became those of a lament, for each day she reported greater loss and ruin as the soldiers and the flight of the commercially active people spelled the end of the last vestiges of repose and prosperity. At Alva's request, she issued an ordinance prohibiting flight, but she dared to claim that the only way to stop people from fleeing would be for the king to state his intentions. However, she knew that his determination to extirpate heresy would limit the appeal of any of Philip's policies. So many people had become involved in the new religion, and Philip's notion of guilt seemed so inclusive, that escape became a sensible recourse.[21] The actual ordinance against taking flight came directly from Madrid. In it, Philip claimed that he had to abandon his intention to refrain from using force because the people proved unworthy of clemency by fleeing in large numbers. People had to stay either to be punished for their past deeds or to be brought back to the path of righteousness in life and worship. Since the ordinance had a godly purpose, everyone had to share his determination in applying its provisions. In a gesture that became typical of the new regime, the king declared that anyone who had knowledge of another's plans to flee would, if the matter went unreported, share the guilt of the person who escaped. Margaret had to request that the channel towns keep a close watch for fugitives and, acting at Alva's behest, she asked the provincial councils of justice to increase their efforts at seizing the property of those accused of heresy.[22]

Alva also subjected the families of fugitives to increasingly harsh measures. Appalled that wives and children of fugitives continued to enjoy their wealth and property and even journeyed to see them, he ordered that all property be seized and placed under the supervision of "good Catholics," who would also direct the lives of remaining family members.[23] These measures only increased the tension within the occupied cities and imported troubles to those, like Brussels, that had remained calm. Commissioners, henceforth agents of the Council of Troubles rather than of the governing councils, went forth furnished with powers of interrogation and confiscation that put them directly at odds with local authorities. Margaret witnessed the sad fact that they subjected cities she had previously dubbed either good or bad to precisely the same treatment. With

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[21] Ibid., 3: 418–420. Margaret to Philip, 4 Oct. 1567.

[22] *Correspondance . . . Philippe II*, 2: 636–637. Margaret to the Councils of Justice, 31 Aug. 1567.

[23] EA 1177.5, piece 11. 6 Nov. 1567.

nothing to be gained by silence, those who hated the restored religion and the regime became more outspoken, and edicts against criticizing Catholicism had to be reissued.[24]

When the king finally responded to Margaret's complaints, he only acknowledged her worries and insisted that all matters had to await his arrival, which he continued to put off. Finances plagued Margaret, for Alva allowed her to continue to manage payments, or rather the lack of them. Philip did not want any meeting of even newly loyal estates, such as those of Brabant, but regular subsidies had reached their legal expiration date and renewal could only come through the normal institutions. Thus Philip had to reconsider, although he ordered that the estates had to meet under a strict prohibition of general debate and with only the renewal of taxes on the agenda. For Margaret, the royal change of heart brought some financial relief, but her greatest disappointment remained Philip's refusal to journey to the Netherlands. The king showed great concern for his personal safety, claiming that the journey had to be at just the right time or it might become too perilous. He explained that his duty to do God's work required scrupulous attention to himself. In any event, in October 1567 Philip wrote that God's grace, assisted in some measure by Margaret's hard work, had restored matters to such a degree that he could briefly delay resolution of affairs without harm. Philip wrote that God had chosen to restore matters and that he benefitted from the fruits of divine labor.[25]

2. *Futile Pleas to Philip II*

For Philip, God's grace and his own singular position as the servant of a divine plan became an overriding consideration in all affairs. Naturally he never questioned his perception of either God or of himself as a prime actor in a divine scheme. The more pragmatic Margaret wanted to thank those who had actually done the work of restoring order and to see to the punishment of those who had occasioned their labors. However, letters from Madrid and the presence of Alva constantly reminded her that power had shifted in the Netherlands and that she could only thank the king for

[24] Le Barre, *Mémoires*, 2: 388–390.
[25] *Correspondance française*, 3: 371–372. Philip to Margaret, 13 Oct. 1567.

accepting, as he came to put it, her earnest wishes to retire as regent.[26] She had no recourse and could only warn of the persistence of decline in the provinces and the harmful nature of the new military regime. Alva, to her, lacked all appreciation for the concerns proper to a true governor and he subordinated the business of state to military objectives undertaken against a disarmed and cowed populace. Margaret dispatched her secretary, Tomasso Machiavelli, and a gentleman of her court, Lopez Gaillo, to convey her personal apprehension to the king, but he received the messages without comment.

Even in the face of such repeated rebuffs and for as long as she remained in the Netherlands Margaret regarded herself duty bound to report regularly. As she prepared for her departure, Margaret begged Philip to reconsider a policy that already had reduced the material well-being of the provinces considerably. To her, the presence of Alva's army destroyed the very essence of the land, since commerce had stopped and the soldiers consumed existing foodstuffs and wealth. Alva compelled the good towns that had never wavered from faith and crown to pay for troops he forced upon them, and his confiscations in the bad towns reduced their citizens to penury. Margaret claimed that the citizens of the Netherlands had never had to pay so much for garrison forces, and Alva inflicted his demands without any consideration for the past. All of this made Margaret question Philip's actual intentions, especially since his previous promises remained unfulfilled. In many cases, cities remonstrated with her that agreements she had made in the name of the king had come to nothing and she had to try to explain why promises of clemency proved to be empty. She simply could not believe that Philip had decided to inflict punishment on good and bad alike, something utterly unacceptable in a proper commonwealth.[27]

Margaret scarcely exaggerated the situation in expressing her concerns. The effect of the new regime on the cities went far beyond immediate and obvious economic distress. Once-independent magistrates who had remained loyal to Margaret's regime and had nothing to fear from her expressed apprehension about Alva. Leaders of those cities that had experienced moderate troubles in 1566 became alarmed. The magistrates of Enghien reflected the attitude well. Terrified by the prospect of having

[26] *Correspondance . . . Philippe II*, 2: 651–652. Philip to Margaret and to provincial authorities, 13 Oct. 1567.

[27] Ibid., 424–431. Margaret to Philip, 22 Oct., 9 Nov. and 22 Nov. 1567.

Alva and his commissioners descend upon them, they began to police their own people in an arbitrary manner, arresting some on presumption of religious irregularity or because they had a reputation for such, steps they would previously have regarded as abhorrent. Reporting this in an obsequious letter to the newly reorganized Council of Hainaut, the magistrates made it clear that they wanted to establish a reputation that would guard them from the indignation of Alva.[28]

The attitude of those Calvinists who remained combined fury, despair, and panic. Margaret knew of the efforts many of them made to flee, first from the cities she regarded as obviously bad, such as Tournai, but subsequently from all places as it became clear that Alva felt determined to punish everyone who had the slightest contact with the seemingly defunct Calvinist cause. By the end of August 1567 Margaret was receiving accusations sent anonymously to local magistrates denouncing them for inquisitorial tactics. Many of these used the agreements Margaret imposed on garrisoned cities as the basis for the protest, for she had assured everyone that religion would not be the sole grounds for arrest and punishment. In shock and rage, the Calvinists and their sympathizers realized that the rules had changed.[29]

Even worse, many of their fellow citizens relished the prospect of savage punishment for the Calvinists, who had been so arrogant and willful in 1566. Alva alone did not create the conditions necessary for the subsequent divisions in the Netherlands. The elements necessary for civil war emerged early in Margaret's tenure as regent and she had barely averted an outbreak in 1566. The possibility remained for civil war or rebellion to develop with the least encouragement. Margaret knew and dreaded that fact. She had designed her pacification program to place firm controls on both sides of the religious issue, allowing Catholicism to triumph but not to persecute. She became understandably dismayed when Alva's government unleashed passion by insisting on retribution. Even as she continued to meet with her councils to discuss the strife unfolding around her, Alva enhanced the powers of his own Council of Troubles. Spanish control of the council remained obvious, but the ease with which Alva added local members became equally apparent. Late in 1567, more members of Margaret's government transferred willingly into the entourage of the council,

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[28] *BCRH*, 8: 64–66. Magistrates of Enghien to the Council of Hainaut, 4 Nov. 1567.
[29] Ibid., 8: 61–64. Pasquilles against the Court of Hainaut, Aug.–Sept. 1567.

leaving behind all the beliefs and practices that had previously shaped their political actions.

Until the end of 1567, the Council of Troubles dispatched orders through Margaret's councils and connections in the provinces, but without allowing any discussion. It adhered to strict rules of secrecy and acted as both court and governing council. Margaret felt sorrow at merely existing as a conduit for the regime and dismay at seeing information compiled by her agents and commissioners being used to indict large numbers of people. She witnessed the organization of an attack on the persons and property of the accused that had no basis in the practices of the past. The moderate policies of her government evaporated. Men who had served her within the confines of the previous constitution of the Netherlands seemed quite content, even eager, to impose the absolutistic rules of law and governance of the military regime.[30]

Alva's dislike of her previous policies spared Margaret from having to participate in the organization of long torture sessions and executions that affected all parts of the Netherlands. The Council of Troubles captured the great and small and treated them equally. Artisans of undistinguished standing in Bruges, Tournai, and other cities stood in the same dock before the same judges and mounted the same scaffold as aristocrats whose personal finery remained their only distinguishing mark at their execution. Margaret was a disgusted observer of the council as it labored to earn the popular sobriquet, the Council of Blood. She wanted to be well away from Alva's venture into government by punishment, but she had to stay to assist in establishing the regime that she hated. Dozens of petitions came to her since magistrates saw in her the last hope to moderate Philip's peculiar, remorseless assault on his subjects.

The magistrates of Lières begged for relief from the Spanish troops quartered there, saying that the inhabitants had begun to flee to escape the enormous expense. Two thousand troops and their followers had taken over the two hundred households where they could find food and beds. Likewise, the magistrates of Ghent watched helplessly as Alva's men took what they wanted and acted in a rude and insolent manner toward authority. Audenarde had quickly run out of food for the garrison quartered there and complained that the soldiers had begun to plunder the countryside. Alva's officials set the prices for goods at an artificially low level, quartered large numbers of soldiers in houses that already had five

[30] Iongh, *Madama*, 357–358.

families in them, and put the horses in workshops when barns and stables filled up. The soldiers consumed all available money, leaving the wealthy of the city unable to continue the cloth trade on which all depended. They asked Margaret why this happened to them despite the firmness with which the city had supported her and the Catholic cause. In Brussels, the magistrates noted the effect of the troops on revenue. Trade slowed, as did the business of the court, depriving them of their principal sources of money and leaving them unable to meet normal tax requirements. Thus when Alva imposed a fixed sum to support each of the soldiers, they regarded it as an impossible burden.[31]

None of the magistrates dared to petition Alva directly, so they continued to address themselves to Margaret. She understood too well the financial uncertainties of the times since her government had barely escaped bankruptcy on several occasions and she had warned Philip and Alva of the consequences of expensive quartering long before. Those warnings had gone unheeded, as did each successive petition she sent to court. Content to operate through the Council of Troubles, Alva became impervious to appeals and solicited information only from informants. Eager for money or revenge, people hastened to give information against aristocrats, magistrates, and their neighbors, thus helping Alva at every step.[32] Margaret became increasingly depressed by the decay of the commonwealth.

Toward the end of November 1567, Tomasso Machiavelli returned from his mission to Madrid with Philip's letter graciously granting her leave to withdraw. In it, the king said all the correct things, offering a flurry of platitudes to modify his earlier accusations that she had rendered him poor service. Clearly he wanted Margaret compliant and amiable in departing, but her response dashed royal hopes. Margaret said that she left with the regret of seeing the provinces fall into disaster. She had liked the duty given to her and felt unhappy with the results. Nor could she leave without reminding the king that part of the financial crisis he had ignored would leave the Netherlands with her since she had taken out personal loans to pay for public business and the creditors wanted their money. Alva refused to accept responsibility for the financial problems even as he formally took the charge of regent from her. When she raised the issue of debt and the unequal treatment of people in the provinces,

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[31] *Correspondance française*, 3: 375–378. Magistrates of Lières, Ghent, Audenarde and Brussels to Margaret, Nov. 1567. Supporting documents are in EA 244.5.

[32] *Conseil des Troubles*, 512–529. Activities of the Council, 9 Sept. 1567–15 Jan. 1568.

where his troops harmed good as well as errant subjects, Alva retorted that he had orders from the king, who wanted to hear nothing more about the troubles and problems of the Netherlands.

The encounter with Alva made Margaret respond with a letter to Philip reminding him of the duties of kings with respect to justice. The concept of justice bound all kings, in her opinion, to gather proper evidence and then to act within the principles of mercy, making sure that punishments did not exceed the crimes involved. In particular, Margaret expressed dismay that evidence her commissioners had procured in an effort to determine precisely what had happened during the insurrection of 1566 was now being used by Alva to inflict punishment on a truly grand scale. The injustice of the situation seemed obvious. People brought before her commissioners in 1566 thought that modest involvement with Calvinism would meet with commensurate punishment, but the Council of Troubles turned their confessions into indictments for capital offenses. In contrast, Margaret believed that human and divine law required moderation. She warned that the great number of executions proposed by Alva would return the provinces to the troubled situation of 1566 instead of leading to permanent peace and tranquility. She chided Philip for his failure to come to the Netherlands himself since distance evidently made him incapable of seeing the need for a general pardon. Her conversations with Alva only showed his determination to make people of every sort and condition suffer punishment before consideration of any pardon. Margaret refused to accept his view that he had to make an example of the people of the Netherlands and she made no effort to hide the disagreements that had characterized their final meetings.

Margaret would rather have reached common accord in discussions with her successor, and she became apprehensive for the people of the Netherlands. Alva's position as duke and his direct relationship with the king gave him extraordinary power. Why, Margaret asked, did he dispense so thoroughly with the attributes of pity, compassion, and mercy? An infinite number of previously errant people became automatically guilty of heresy according to the narrow interpretation allowed by Alva. His determination to punish everyone only forced the good into despair and the bad into fury and flight. Margaret warned that hate would replace what little love Philip still attracted, and only loathing, rancor, and malevolence toward him would follow. Thus the slightest matter could trigger revolt, whereas if he only attacked the authors of the problem and confined Alva to the actions permitted by written law, he could restore the sound relationship with his subjects fostered by his predecessors. Margaret never wavered in

her insistence that the provisions of justice extant in the land required no enhancement in order to guarantee honorable and profitable penalties in keeping with the crimes committed. Indeed, she had long wanted to take the lives of the Calvinist leaders and the wealth of their close followers, and had relished humiliating the cities that had specialized in audacity during 1566. However, she shrank in horror from the slaughter of all who had even a passing contact with Calvinism and attendant sedition. Consequently she begged the king to open his eyes, even if he would not make the effort to journey to the Netherlands, for his subjects did not deserve what he sent Alva to do to them.[33] In all of her final communications with Philip, Margaret remained the champion of traditional governing forms. Philip's refusal to abide by the provisions of laws as they existed in the Netherlands continued to shock her the most. Moreover, in her view he violated another canon of governance by acting exclusively through agents and refusing to come to the provinces to see with his own eyes what had to be done. To Margaret, such refusal in times of crisis showed a lack of principle; all that she had done in his name would degenerate into despair and revolt if he remained aloof and left matters in the indifferent hands of Alva. She noted the displeasure that the cities untouched by the troubles of 1566 expressed over her departure. Even before she left, disorders occasioned by the presence of Spanish troops broke out in those places.[34]

Philip failed to understand the devotion to faith and land that Margaret brought to her tasks as regent and governess. Not only did the king want obedient servants, which did not suit Margaret in the least, but he viewed everything through Spanish eyes. Unlike their father, Philip failed to see beyond a single land and its narrow sense of worship and rule. Margaret, like Charles, saw a more complex world and accepted challenges and even changes without deep rancor. Alva suited Philip's temperament and goals better and his actions in the Netherlands quickly brought the differences between brother and sister into sharp relief. To her sorrow, Alva had compelled Margaret to be his accomplice in the first months of his regency. Her own position never wavered and as Margaret moved through some of the traditional formalities required for the transfer of power, she spoke in the same measured words for moderation, a general pardon, and the convening of the Estates General. Tradition called for the convocation of an Estates General as part of the transfer of power to a new regent, but

[33] *Correspondance française*, 3: 384–390. Margaret to Philip, 21 Dec. 1567.
[34] Marchi, *Lettere*, 141–149.

Philip refused to issue the orders and Margaret, without Alva's presence, appeared before the estates of Brabant and Flanders to take formal leave. She reiterated her views and received a warm reception despite having to recite passages honoring Philip. Those hollow formalities deepened the gloom of those who had only Alva to deal with in the future. Past contests with Margaret were forgotten in the horror of the new regime, and each of the estates gave Margaret a grant of money as thanks for her service.[35]

Furious at her reception, Alva further humiliated Margaret by delaying the final audience necessary before her departure. Noting that they had nothing to gain from him, some in her Italian retinue advocated simply leaving, but Margaret remained, wanting one more appearance before the Council of State. There she further vexed Alva by speaking for a general pardon, moderation, and the convocation of an Estates General. His response was contemptuous, but at least he concluded her time of servitude and allowed her to organize her trip to Italy. For her Italian companions, the release was welcome news, and Francesco Marchi, who had been with her in the Netherlands from the beginning, reported how they were eager, even champing at the bit, to be gone from the oppressive atmosphere.[36]

In the end, Margaret could only pack her bags and be a silent witness to the despair that she saw as she began her long journey to an uncertain future in Italy by way of Luxembourg and Franche-Comté.[37] Alva allowed a grand departure as she left the Coudenburg Palace on 30 December surrounded by cavalry and foot soldiers, part of a large procession marked by sadness as well as pomp—a procession that resembled a funeral cortege for the Netherlands. A forlorn figure at the moment of her departure, Margaret seemed crushed by the vision of the harsh regime she left behind. Her guilt for the insurrection of 1566 remained secure in Philip II's imagination, but she carried none of that with her. She regretted the episode, but had dealt with it in accord with the rules that she had inherited on becoming governess and regent. Philip's simplistic approach, stolidly implemented by Alva, destroyed community life and imposed a regime in which the informer and spy became valued assistants. Alva angrily deflected efforts to maintain local prerogatives of any sort since he insisted that everyone shared responsibility for the insurrection of 1566, which had thus voided

[35] Iongh, *Madama*, 355.
[36] Marchi, *Lettere*, 153–156.
[37] *Correspondance française*, 3: 391–398. Margaret to Philip, 21 Dec. 1567.

all local privileges. His efforts to impose this new concept of government alienated vast numbers of otherwise loyal subjects. The transfer of respect from the Brussels regime to the people who had fled from the land during Margaret's last year in office accentuated differences and helped to create the conditions necessary for civil war. Active and creative people remained in the provinces, but under less than propitious circumstances. At Brussels, people hoped that the king would issue a general pardon as Margaret began her journey to the Duchy of Parma, and their spirits fell more when none appeared.[38] She left with relief but also with lingering nervous illness made worse by the emotional leave taking. Philip's rebuke and her unanswered pleas for clemency haunted her thoughts.[39]

Eight years earlier Margaret's welcome had been anything but enthusiastic. A powerful, arrogant aristocracy and a prosperous urban leadership had wanted a more dynamic and dashing person in keeping with the vigor and prosperity still present in 1559. Those who survived the intervening years felt sad to see Margaret leave, for in both theoretical and physical terms her successor began wrecking the provinces. Pietro Aldobrandini, Margaret's new secretary, gave a sad picture of a populace deeply shocked by the event of her departure. Uncertainty and disbelief clouded all activity.[40] Politically, Alva accomplished immediately what Philip had only hoped for in 1559, but the cost of successful absolutism came high because half the land ultimately repudiated the regime. His policies and the ensuing civil war had disastrous economic and cultural consequences for the southern provinces as commercial and creative power migrated north in the company of those who wanted to maintain their new religion or the old forms of government.

Many among the artists and writers followed. Some had made the journey early in the time of troubles, as with the artist Pieter Aertsen who had already settled in Amsterdam because of the protection it offered. Following the advent of Alva's regime, creative people felt threatened and many withdrew to neighboring lands. Frans Hogenberg left; he had engraved scenes of the troubled times and thus had reason to fear the scrutiny of Alva and the Council of Troubles. However, Pieter Brueghel best represented the tragedy of the time. Ill and unhappy in the months preceding Margaret's departure, he began destroying engravings that contained

38 Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 304–305.
39 Lefevre, *Margerita*, 239–240.
40 Ibid., 245.

scenes and notations out of keeping with the views of triumphant Spanish absolutism. He had never admired Margaret or associated his marvelous talent with her court, yet she had remained committed to the style of life and civilization that made the Netherlands creative and fascinating. Brueghel burned his work in the atmosphere of persecution, fear, and hatred that became the hallmark of the new order. His final, unfinished, painting of a shipwreck depicted a tragedy on a dark, dreadful seascape. Some of the paintings that immediately preceded it during 1567 and 1568, including the famous canvases *The Parable of the Blind* and *The Cripples*, demonstrated a deep pessimism and offer many levels of interpretation. However, other paintings continued the brilliant depiction of ordinary scenes in the beautiful countryside of the Netherlands. The graceful mix of sacred and commonplace subjects offered opportunities for presenting moods of joy and vigor as well as foreboding. Ortelius, himself one of the major contributors to the culture of the day, commented that Brueghel's canvases always contained more thought than paint. He clearly understood Brueghel's concern. The freedom and vigor of the previous years gave way to a time of worry and apprehension.[41]

Calvinism had paved the way for many of the changes. The religion and the iconoclasm it sponsored had directly intruded into creative processes and made life as uncertain for artists as did persecution by Alva, who imposed the artistic rules of the Council of Trent. Turbulent and treacherous political and religious affairs thus had an incredibly disruptive influence on cultural life. The patronage of the church vanished and commissions from the Brussels court became rare. Even in better times, Margaret's court had not enjoyed prosperity. The meager funds available to her allowed no major buildings and only a few paintings by the official court painters, especially the portrait artist Anthonis Mor.[42] Otherwise, the major cultural achievements occurred in places distant from Brussels. Spanish rule did not assist cultural continuity in the Netherlands, but the Reformation also did its part in ending the glories of the Renaissance, which foundered in the dangerous waters of religious dispute.

Thus as Philip sent Margaret away in disgrace, she joined numbers of others who migrated in search of safety. For Margaret, her departure later seemed a blessing, given the nature of subsequent events in the provinces.

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[41] Fryns, *Pieter Brueghel l'ancien* (Brussels: 1969), 22–30; Grossmann, *Pieter Bruegel* (London: 1973).

[42] Anthonie van Dashorst of Utrecht went on to become an international figure under the patronage of Philip II. He worked in Spain under the name Moro and in England as More.

The Netherlands that Ludovico Guicciardini had described in 1559 vanished. The dynamic quality of life in the Netherlands had assured a unique and creative character in a hundred different cities in the provinces, but it had eroded under the combined attacks of Spanish rule and Calvinism. Economic energy shifted from cities such as Tournai, Bruges and Ghent, first to Antwerp and ultimately to Amsterdam. The loss of economic impetus resulted in a continued decline in prosperity and population. Only the shell of civilization remained, and the declining cities no longer contributed to it in the grand manner of previous generations. Economic distress added to the contraction of cultural life that Alva's regime encouraged. Ludovico Guicciardini himself subsequently offered incautious criticism of Alva from Antwerp and suffered prompt arrest and imprisonment.[43] The new regime tolerated no critics. The loss was felt by all who did not benefit from the Spanish regime and it made the memory of Margaret's regency a fond one. Indeed, her dismissal and the contempt of Alva made her reputation as the champion of the Netherlands, where her symbol became the olive branch, while that of Alva was the sword.[44] Margaret herself recognized that the life of the provinces was in peril as obedience withered away and justice vanished.

[43] Guicciardini, *Lettere*, 339–345. Appeals by G.B. Guicciardini for the release of his brother Ludovico.

[44] Lefevre, *Margerita*, p. 246.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MADAMA MARGARITA

1. *Talent and Energy Unbound*

Once again Margaret traveled south to Italy in the winter. The drab, cold weather did not improve her feelings of despair over the ruin of the Netherlands and dread at the prospect of joining Ottavio at the new palace in Piacenza. However, she had obtained her freedom from the prison created by Philip's orders and Alva's demands and contempt. Once she was on the road, Alva had to face the situation on his own. She left Brussels with a large military escort that accompanied her to Namur. As the party traveled beyond Luxembourg, the escort became much smaller and she had a modest entourage for the remainder of the journey. Marchi wrote of her impatience to get back to the friendly climate and people of Italy. As Margaret made her way along the Rhine she received a mixed welcome, but her reception became warmer when she reached Basle and Lucerne. She felt growing relief as she drew closer to the snow fields of the Alps.[1] There the oppression of serving Philip II finally lifted completely as her party battled its way through the St. Gothard Pass and swiftly descended toward the Po River valley. Ottavio greeted her at Bellinzona near Milan and the two of them made the final part of the journey together, arriving in Piacenza in February 1568. There, a newly completed wing of the palace that Margaret had helped to plan awaited her, and an elaborate formal entry into the city ended with her reception in its rooms.

Margaret's release from the cares and burdens of office showed in her improved health, although the gout and liver problems she had developed in the Netherlands never left her. The fright and the horror of strife was, she thought, over for her and she abandoned the search for power and glory. Although she wrote to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese of her contentment at being with family, she had not longed to return to Ottavio and

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[1] G.B. Guicciardini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini al Cosimo e Francesco de'Medici scritti dal Belgico dal 1550 al 1577*, Battistine ed. (Brussels-Rome: 1949), 306–334; Francesco Marchi, *Cento Lettere*, Ronchini ed. (Rome:) 150–161; Renato Lefevre, *"Madama," Margarita d'Austria (1522–1586)* (Rome: 1986), 245.

MARGARETA AVSTRIACA, DVCISSA PARMÆ ET PLACENTIÆ, GENERALIS BELGARVM DITTIONVM, PHILIPPI HISPANIARVM REGIS NOMINE GVBERNATRIX; AB ANNO M. D. LIX. VSQ. AD ANNVM 1567.

Fig. 6. Margaret on Her Return to Italy. British Museum.

settled uneasily into the court dominated by her husband and son, both of whom followed a licentious lifestyle that she had to ignore, at least temporarily. Margaret had no intention of slipping into the role of Ottavio's wife, something he did not want in any event, and she took up residence in Piacenza while he stayed in Parma. The years in the Netherlands had not changed her often aloof personality. Margaret became more introverted, susceptible to moods, and irritable, all of which made her seek the same solitude that had attracted her father as he grew older.[2]

She did seek to cultivate some personal and family relationships. Her daughter-in-law Maria and two of her grandchildren, Rannucio and Marga-

[2] Ines d'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio intime di Margerita* d'Austria (Naples: 1919), 175–176; Lefevre, "*Madama," Margarita d'Austria*, 248.

rita, occupied part of her time. Margaret was also proud of Alexander, in whose hands the fortune of the dynasty now rested, but he did not hide his misgivings over Margaret's clash with Philip II and Alva, fearing that his future military career might suffer. Philip also continued to refuse to transfer the citadel of Piacenza into Farnese hands. The king had toyed with the family for years over that issue, always holding out the prospect until some desired service was rendered, but then never concluding the matter. Margaret regarded his refusal as a breach of trust given her sacrifice in the Netherlands. The bitter disappointment, often directed at her, voiced by Ottavio and Alexander helped to shorten the number of days Margaret enjoyed at court. From the moment she had abandoned her place as first woman of Rome in 1550 to join Ottavio in Parma, the position of consort in a provincial court had never suited her and that was even truer on her return from the Netherlands. There she had been the center, even if the position she occupied had often been unhappy and unrewarding. In Piacenza, Farnese schemes were a poor substitute for a place in European politics. To keep active, Margaret engaged in a wide correspondence, maintaining her relationship with Alessandro Farnese, renewing her ties to Granvelle who at that time helped to represent Philip II in Rome, and continuing contacts in Spain and the Netherlands. Alessandro became a source of encouragement when she reflected on the unhappy times in the Netherlands and her modest position in the Duchy of Parma. He wanted her to resume active public life, recommending that she take a positive role in the feudal dependencies in Abruzzo that she had been granted by her father on the death of Alessandro de' Medici. He spoke warmly of the confidence all Italy had in her abilities.[3] Margaret welcomed the idea of again becoming active in Italian affairs and she devoted her energy to them. However, she never ceased to express her concern and outrage over the declining condition of the Netherlands. Even as she developed her position in Italy, dismay over the conduct of Alva gripped her imagination. Margaret thought what was happening was a form of madness and she longed to help resolve the worsening problem. Instead, she had to read about the destruction of the peace she had constructed in the Netherlands and the drift of the provinces toward rebellion and war.[4]

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[3] Ines d'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio intimo*, 177.

[4] Jane de Iongh, *Madama, Margaretha van Oostenrijk, Hertogin van Parma en Piacenza* (Amsterdam: 1967), 359–363. Most of Margaret's letters were lost in the destruction of the Naples archive by the Germans in World War II.

Time and distance thus did not alter Margaret's fundamental views about the Netherlands, but there was nothing she could do except worry. In contrast, while she remained in Piacenza, she could act. Her court, in which Machiavelli and Marchi continued to serve as secretary and court engineer, became a center for innovative projects. Marchi constructed a paper factory, putting ideas he had learned in Brussels to work in Piacenza with the full participation of Margaret. However, even with such projects, the life there did not suit her and Margaret decided to sever her ties with Parma and to withdraw to settle in Abruzzo, lands she had originally visited in her first years in Italy when she lived in the Kingdom of Naples. In September 1568, joined by Alexander, she journeyed to L'Aquila in Abruzzo in the mountains east of Rome. She decided to reside part of the time in Ortona with its small palace on the Adriatic Sea. To emphasize the new order that she had in mind, Margaret also began the construction of a governing center at Cittaducale, work that was accomplished between 1569 and 1572.

In 1569, she returned to Piacenza for several months to assist in the birth of another grandchild and to help to care for Alexander, who had fallen ill. Once he had recovered, Margaret withdrew to Cittaducale and Ortona and never returned to Parma and Piacenza except in passage. In the remarkable move, Margaret made it clear that she wanted to remain close to Alexander but did not intend to live as a Farnese. Instead, she was thinking of her own reputation, which she had established as the first woman of Rome. Leaving was out of keeping with what was expected for dynastic relationships, but it suited her personal situation. The acceptable alternative was to enter a convent, but Margaret preferred to undertake an active role in governing Abruzzo. She had never lost her interest in the lands and their opportunities and needs. In Abruzzo there were clearly corrupt and inefficient feudal and urban administrations, and she took to the task of reform with enthusiasm.[5] The long years of being frustrated and thwarted in her wishes to govern properly in the Netherlands had not destroyed her interest in creating a good administration. Nor had being repudiated by Philip II tarnished her image, which was even enhanced by the fury of Alva in the Netherlands. Thus she received a formal but friendly welcome to L'Aquila in May 1569. The procession included ceremonies

[5] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 178.

that displayed some imperial symbols and the entire affair demonstrated that she was honored as a Hapsburg daughter and an Italian princess.[6]

Margaret's new court, composed of 150 people, was energetic and the center of reform efforts. She developed some of the ideas she had attempted to implement in the Netherlands, including having a modern fiscal administration that would work with a public bank.[7] Entrenched interests opposed her, but Margaret earned wide support by proceeding with a logical, positive plan designed to benefit all the people. She set a personal standard by developing her interest in handwork and inspiring a small industry in fine cloth with glittering gold and silver stitching. Francesco Marchi was her closest advisor on practical matters dealing with the creation of small paper and printing industries. For grander schemes, her economic advisor was Guiliano Ardinghelli, a long time administrator for the Farnese court. He encouraged Margaret to promote growth that would draw urban and rural economies together, and also advocated achieving stability through the creation of a bank. In December, 1569, Ottavio visited her at Cittaducale and she honored him in an elaborate series of public receptions even though she refused his request to return to Parma. The visit affirmed the separation of the two and the place of Margaret as an independent force. Her vision was directed toward public concerns in practical and thoughtful terms, and she dedicated herself to governing, organizing the administration of justice, and promoting economic life in Abruzzo.

In 1571 Philip appointed Margaret as the permanent governor of L'Aquila and the Viceroy of Naples, the son of Madame de Lannoy who had educated her as a girl, appeared to take part in a series of ceremonies and parades honoring her new powers. The region had never been the center of political attention by a resident governor and she immediately turned to improving public life, buildings, and spaces, creating a useful and handsome legacy. The new power enabled Margaret to issue *Ordini*, ordinances regulating administrative and fiscal procedures. They attempted to impose the most current standards and procedures while still preserving the individual character of each of the traditional territorial components of the province. She put forth her hopes in a thoughtful manner that showed her administrative experience. Setting high but attainable judicial standards to curb fraud, extortion, and oppression, the *Ordini* represented a decisive

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[6] Dumont, *Marguerite de Parme: Bâtard de Charles-Quint* (Brussels: 1999), 265.

[7] Gaetano Sabatini, "Lo 'Stato Farnesiano' de Margherita d'Austria," in S. Mantini, *Margherita d'Austria (1522–1586). Construzioni Politiche Diplomazia tra Corte Farnese e Monarchia Spagnola* (Rome: 2003), 152.

effort to curtail the disorderly feudal relationships that characterized the region. Her interest in banking was part of this scheme, for she saw it as an institution that strengthened the entire community, serving the state but not challenging historical and geopolitical diversity.[8]

At the same time, Margaret commissioned designs for a new palace in L'Aquila that would be the center of a complex of streets and buildings in the new style of sixteenth century urban planning. Jacopo Barocchio daVignola, who had designed the palace at Piacenza, provided her with an initial sketch for remodeling the small palace she occupied. His objective was to make it an open, hospitable environment that would be a focus for both work and pleasure.[9] She also undertook the construction of structures for the municipality and the church in Cittaducale. Margaret was determined to create both work and an attractive environment. Cittaducale had a history of being receptive to manufacture and education, and Margaret assisted by encouraging the university, literary activity, and printing. Francesco Marchi orchestrated the innovative works between 1572 and 1576, directing many of the projects, thinking of the new streets, churches, palaces, and a piazza as her major accomplishments. Marchi also supervised efforts to create a vigorous printing industry in L'Aquila. He offered his own work on fortifications as one of the first books to be published there.[10] He had long earned praise for his inventive military architecture and the publication was the summary and climax of those efforts. However, in Abruzzo, Marchi dedicated himself to purely peaceful projects. Margaret's goal was to give material form to her concept of good government, and the results were new commercial structures along with an elegant and easily accessible palace built like an island lying in the center of two piazzas linked by two broad streets.[11] She continued her interest in improving the economy of the city, helping Marchi to establish the mills and presses necessary to manufacture paper in L'Aquila as he had in Piacenza.

The efforts of Marchi complimented her hopes and visions. He had been pleased with her decision to live in Abruzzo, a province that he had first seen when he entered her service in 1537. He had become fascinated with

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[8] Ibid., 158–166.

[9] Lefevre, *"Madama," Margarita d'Austria*, 252–253.

[10] Ibid., 266; Marchi's *Trattato* was published to honor the visit of Don Juan of Austria to Aquila in 1575.

[11] Mario Centofanti, "Il Palazzo di Margherita d'Austris all'Aquila e l'imagine della città nel cinquecento," in S. Mantini ed., *Margherita d'Austria*, 202–206.

the province's mountains, and particularly the Grand Stesso, now Monte Corno. An adventurous person, he had wished to climb the mountain but circumstances delayed him until 1573 when he was 69 years old. At that time he became the first recorded person to climb the Grand Stasso, and rejoiced at how far he could see. An early advocate of personal engagement in arduous projects, Marchi was convinced that the experience was a positive one with moral significance for him.[12]

In 1576, Marchi died, leaving Margaret deeply saddened. He had been by her side since her arrival as a girl in Naples, facilitating her moves to Florence, Rome, Parma, Brussels, and Abruzzo. During her years as the first woman of Rome, Marchi, a tireless investigator of Rome's buildings and art, had been active in making her court a center for discussing art and architecture. In the same year, Cosimo de' Medici's death brought additional grief, but otherwise her life at that time had an ordinary and, to her, pleasant character. She was immersed in duties she liked and surrounded by people who pleased her. Some projects involved her in agriculture, particularly when she purchased a large tract of land to foster a cooperative venture to improve the breeding of cattle. When Ottavio again asked her to return to Parma, Margaret ignored the overture and concentrated on making improvements to Cittaducale and Ortona, demonstrating an industriousness that hearkened to her sense of duty and energy rather than to any aristocratic ideals. Philip assisted Margaret by granting additional titles to enhance her government of Abruzzo, adding political and judicial tasks to those she had received in 1571.

Despite her new duties, her court engaged actively in the political affairs of Italy and watched the decaying situation in all Europe. Margaret remained fully aware of the political and religious turmoil in international affairs and particularly of the failure of Spanish repression in the Netherlands or of the general threat posed by the Turks. The coast of Abruzzo and particularly Ortona experienced frequent minor assaults by Turkish forces. She became active in organizing a small force to join in the effort to check the Turks that culminated in the naval victory at Lepanto. Margaret took particular pride in the battle because Alexander was honored for his part and her half-brother Don Juan of Austria was the architect of the victory.[13]

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[12] *Il Corno Monte. Cronaca della prima ascensione sulla vetta de Gran Sasso d'Italia* (Università di Bologna. Archivio Storico).

[13] Lefevre, *"Madama," Margarita d'Austria*, 258–260.

She began corresponding with Cardinal Granvelle in Rome, firmly reestablishing their old friendship and forgetting the harsh time of personal conflict in the Netherlands. Margaret encouraged him to associate with Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, and the two became fast friends in Rome. Granvelle also asked for her opinion on the state of the Netherlands, claiming to value insight based on surviving such an ordeal. Since he represented Philip II in Rome, Margaret correctly regarded his questions as being designed to inform the king, an early step in her rehabilitation in Madrid. That process was aided by Alexander's participation in the Battle of Lepanto, and the praise heaped on Don Juan of Austria, Margaret's younger half-brother, whose existence had been kept a secret by their father who acknowledged him only in his will.[14]

Alexander and Don Juan were nearly the same age and had been taken to the Spanish court at the same time. The victory was a triumph for Don Juan but also earned Alexander high praise. In the aftermath, Don Juan visited Italy and went to Margaret's small court at Ortona, interrupting her solitary life with an encounter that began a warm friendship. They had never met, but Margaret was utterly charmed by a much younger brother who was so filled with talent and ambition. She organized a gala reception for the hero of Lepanto, delighted to honor a brother of such stature. Nor were her feelings unreturned, for Don Juan asked Margaret to raise his own natural daughter at her court. Giovanna of Austria, as the child came to be known, was brought from Naples by Granvelle and joined the small court that consequently became increasingly lively. Margaret cared for her lovingly. Who, after all, knew better than she the difficulties awaiting a Hapsburg princess who had none of the benefits of legitimacy?

2. *Wasted Time in the Netherlands*

The meeting with Don Juan made the condition of the Netherlands once again a concern for Margaret. Alva had finally been recalled and Don Juan, perhaps even joined by Margaret, had been mentioned as his successor. However, Philip II dispatched Don Luis de Requesens instead. He had an equally difficult time, and talk of sending Margaret back never ended. After Requesen's death, Philip again thought of Margaret as a peace mediator, in large part because she was well remembered in the Netherlands,

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[14] *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle, 1565–1582* Charles Piot ed 12 vols. (Brussels: 1897) 12.

being associated with past peace and prosperity and not with recent mayhem and strife. As in all cases, Philip did not rush to effect any changes and he did not issue the necessary orders and instructions. Don Juan was appointed as captain general, but quickly came to be regarded as an intolerant warrior at a moment when peace might have prevailed through negotiations. The effort failed in the aftermath of the Spanish assault on Antwerp. The infamous attack with its widespread looting and murder left the provinces more divided and uncertain than ever. Nor did Philip II hasten the process of mediation through Margaret. In 1576, after being prompted by Granvelle, he asked Margaret to return, but while he spoke to her of peace, he gave Don Juan a completely different mission. Order had collapsed because of the Spanish Fury in Antwerp and the mutiny of troops in other cities, and Don Juan had to confront the meeting of an Estates General at Ghent and the growing influence of the Prince of Orange. Impatient, Don Juan did not make the best of the situation and Margaret's name again was raised as a mediator.

Margaret did want to return to the Netherlands and had a sincere desire to serve, but not under the circumstances that had ruined her first regency. Philip initially thought of her new position as mediator and special envoy to negotiate pacification. In contrast, this time she wanted specific powers and money, and thought that a lesser role would be unprofitable for everyone.[15] In addition, she felt that it was time for Philip to reward her service by restoring the citadel at Piacenza to Farnese hands. After all, not only had she served him for years, but Alexander had journeyed to the Netherlands with Don Juan and was active in his service. Continued royal reluctance to cede control of the citadel, cooled her toward the project, and she also had new concerns about the task. It had been ten years since her departure from the provinces and she had begun to question whether she could pacify a land that had been thrown into chaos so recklessly. She knew that Philip had never wavered in his dedication to achieving military success, whereas she wanted a prompt end to all military activity. Thus she declined, spurring new negotiations with Granvelle and Juan de Zuñiga, Spain's ambassador in Rome.

Granvelle acknowledged her chronic illness from gout even as he tried to engineer her return to the Netherlands. He claimed that affairs there had become so desperate by 1578 that she alone might be able to encourage moderation. Granvelle reaffirmed that message when he wrote to Don Juan

[15] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio, 179*; Lefevre, *"Madama," Marguerita d'Austria*, 276.

that no one could help him more since she was in the provinces when the troubles formed and understood them completely.[16] Convincing the king was more difficult. Philip wanted Margaret's services, but remained indecisive and, in Granvelle's opinion, poorly served. Nor had the king changed his basic attitudes. In responding to Granvelle's suggestion that he hasten Margaret's departure in the interests of peace and compromise, Philip made it clear that reestablishing his form of religion dominated every other consideration and remained a precondition in negotiations.[17]

Yet Granvelle remained optimistic in the spring of 1578, encouraging Margaret to have her small court packed and her mules ready to leave on four days' notice. He felt the urgency that Philip did not, being distressed that disorder was so profound that his usual sources of information had not dared to correspond with him. He wanted to inject Margaret's voice of moderation into the clamor. Don Juan was also enjoying success in the conflict and Granvelle felt that the Estates might be ready to compromise. By that time he was a firm advocate of negotiations and he thought that the times were perfect for Margaret to bring her knowledge and skills to complement Don Juan's military ability. Granvelle provided a voice of reason and optimism despite his inability to rouse Philip's interest. His information was excellent and he spoke frankly to both Margaret and the king, telling them that a growing desire for peace was moderated by a general hatred of Spain.[18] The obvious need for negotiations and Philip's refusal to concur revived the same concerns about the king's policies that had plagued Margaret as regent. Delay had become permanent at his court even though damage always followed; an inflexible king perpetually promised to make up his mind quickly but never did. He also vacillated, constantly searching for new schemes to restore his vision of faith and rule. At one point in early 1578, Philip decided that Don Juan would enjoy military success and thus he did not need Margaret in the Netherlands.

Her own poor health and worries about the uncertainties of working for Philip moderated Margaret's regret at his change of heart. Maria's death in Piacenza added family responsibilities and concerns to her life. While Rannucio and the other boys stayed with their grandfather Ottavio, Margaret brought her granddaughter Margarita to live with her.[19] However,

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[16] *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 8: 1–3 and 78.
[17] Ibid., 15–20.
[18] Ibid., 65–67 and 110.
[19] Lefevre, *"Madama," Margarita d'Austria*, 279.

Granvelle, who had been called to Madrid from Rome to oversee Italian affairs at court, kept prodding Philip to undertake the task of restoring rather than destroying the Netherlands. Margaret was the key figure in this plan, but bickering over funding her mission and negotiating firm orders for her continued for weeks. At one point Margaret was on the verge of leaving, but Philip once again had a spasm of irresolution and she remained at her court where a renewed bout of gout cooled her ardor for the long journey. The resolution of the situation was only hastened by the death of Don Juan from typhus on 1 October 1578. Great sadness mingled with pride for Margaret, since the death of her half-brother meant promotion to a command position for her son. Alexander assumed military control in the Netherlands and initially wanted his mother to assist in dealing with the chaotic political situation. However, he also became convinced that military success was the answer and did not want to share the power he required with his mother. Philip did not understand Alexander's plans and offered praise for the idea of sending Margaret to assist in governing, but as usual little money was forthcoming and he certainly did not intend to turn over Piacenza's citadel as recompense. The pope also urged her on, giving her the Golden Rose, the highest papal award for a woman. A special nuncio came to L'Aquila where a church ceremony, including music commissioned for the occasion, was followed by a flower strewn procession to her palace. Perhaps the pope was encouraged more by Philip's intentions than those of Margaret, for the king made it clear that he wanted restoration of church and crown rather than any compromise. In response to continued vague royal promises, Margaret sent Pietro Aldobrandini, her Italian advisor, from her court to Madrid. He emphasized the firmness of her demands for clearly detailed financial support and political authority. Margaret was blunt in recounting that her regency had been the only powerless one in the recent history of the Netherlands and that she was not going to try again to work while encumbered by serious limitations.

The king made firm promises and ordered Margaret to leave for Namur in Luxemburg in February 1580. Her departure occasioned a real display of affection for her throughout Abruzzo. In an odd and sad note, as she was leaving, Margaret dispatched Don Juan's daughter Giovanna to a cloister in Naples. Granvelle had asked Philip to bring the girl to Madrid, but he had refused to allow the young woman to join the court and he alone could have secured a bright future for her. The promise of a full life had died with her father. In contrast, Margaret took Margarita with her to Namur. She was to marry into the Gonzaga house, which was ironic since

the great-grandfather of her betrothed had been the murderer of her own great-grandfather, Pier Luigi.[20]

On the slow journey north, Margaret was haunted by worries about her responsibilities.[21] Alexander was clearly the commander of all military operations and was already successful. What was her position to be and how was she to share power? Margaret was close to her son, but the two viewed life very differently. She held firm to the idea that compromise and pacification were the means to move the provinces along the road to peace rather than destruction. Convinced that reliance on armed force assured the continued descent of public life into cruelty and the further spread of Protestantism, she advocated compromise. Her views collided with those of the king, but they also made her presence unwelcome to Alexander who had his own ideas and hopes. Alexander was preoccupied with his future and thought of the Netherlands as merely a temporary phase and an opportunity for military exploits. Thus his mother's vision of harmony contradicted his dream of a military solution and there was friction between them from the moment she entered the provinces.

In June 1580 Margaret arrived in Luxemburg and established a court at Namur. A period of confusion followed in which there was every appearance of a complete rift with Alexander. She was always careful in her correspondence, asking for a clear delineation of powers and a statement of what duties each would have in public tasks. Philip's refusal to respond aggravated them both and a long, awkward stalemate followed. Early in 1581, Margaret abandoned hope and wrote to Granvelle that she had no desire to prolong the painful episode. The provinces did not benefit, Philip's service suffered, and her own reputation was diminished. Margaret feared that Alexander would be in open rebellion against her, but Philip never grasped the differences that caused the rift. Alexander began to feel disgust for royal service. Margaret was all too aware of the contradictions that were so much a part of serving Philip and lamented that trying to carry out duties properly became a great source of grief.[22]

Philip confirmed Alexander as captain-general and governor in December 1581. Margaret no longer had a role and wanted to withdraw, but permission for that was slow in coming. The unhappy conclusion of her venture was aggravated by Philip's wish to save face by ignoring the situ-

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[20] Iongh, *Madama*, 400–404.

[21] *Correspondance du Cardinal Granvelle*, 8: 439 and 508–510; Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London: 1977), 208–209.

[22] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 181–183; Lefevre, *"Madama," Marguerita d'Austria*, 281.

ation and dawdling in preparing her order to return to Italy. Her lamentations grew in length and frequency but his silence persisted for eighteen months.[23] Numerous pleas sent to the king through Granvelle came to nothing and Margaret began to suspect the cardinal of duplicity in the matter. However, Granvelle's response was that the king's irresolute and dilatory behavior was ruining everything. Margaret was keenly aware of the worries of the people of the Netherlands who clearly saw the prospect of the ruin of all that remained of religious order, peace, and justice along with the loss of hope for a good life. Unable to do anything for the people other than hear their complaints, Margaret grew increasingly frustrated. She finally received permission to leave in September 1583, and her son, along with many local aristocrats, provided an elaborate escort for her departure from Namur. The promise of peace left with her once again. It was lost in the seeming success of Alexander's victories, but Margaret harbored no hopes that he would achieve a good solution and once again she sought refuge in Italy from the clumsy governance of the Spanish in the Netherlands.

3. *Final Years*

In 1583, Italy represented the quiet life that Margaret relished and she hastened back to it, leaving the Netherlands on September 15th, and, making quick progress, she arrived in Piacenza only a month later. After a brief stop in Parma, Margaret left. Relations with Ottavio had not changed and the three years in Namur had aggravated her poor health and her tendency to suffer bouts of depression and ill temper. Even in Piacenza, well away from Ottavio, she sought solitude, but that was not the case when she returned to her own lands. Having wasted three years, Margaret longed for the peace and opportunities offered by the towns and countryside of Abruzzo, and she took her leave of the Duchy of Parma. On this trip, Margaret went by way of Ferrara and then took a Venetian galley to a new acquisition in Abruzzo, Ortona a Mare, the harbor of the town she favored. Once again in command of her own life, Margaret divided her time between governing and, although always from a distance, family matters. There she followed the exploits of Alexander, who achieved so many victories that Philip finally gave him the citadel at Piacenza. For

[23] *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 9: 28–30, 113, 218–219, 339, and 341.

Margaret, the transfer was hardly a reward. Certainly her efforts for peace and compromise had not brought her benefits. Her illnesses limited the pleasure she could take in life, as did family troubles. Margarita's marriage had been annulled because she could not consummate her vows. Margaret opposed the "violent and dangerous" surgical procedure that the Gonzaga family proposed to remedy her inability to have sex, and Margarita, like Giovanna, was unceremoniously thrust into a cloistered life. Margaret did nothing to prevent that act, believing that it was better to be a nun than to forfeit her life.[24] Nor did she try to build a warm relationship with her grandsons, particularly Rannucio, in Parma. He was too much like Ottavio and found little pleasure in the parochial world that his grandmother liked in Abruzzo.

Ortona became an important focus for her as she saw an opportunity to change the tiny town on the Adriatic Sea that had a violent history and was prey to Turkish attacks. Margaret wished to make it a naval and commercial center and quickly turned to the construction of new buildings and to the reordering of its administration. Margaret did not neglect L'Aquila where she was welcomed back on 4 January 1584 with a festival that included balls, drama, music, and parades. She publicly expressed regret at her lost years in the Netherlands and immediately set to work to deal with issues that had arisen during her time away.[25]

The people of L'Aquila quickly found that Margaret was determined to invest much of her time in Ortona. In March 1584 she began construction of a new palace, commissioning the Roman architect Giacomo della Porta, who worked on the construction of St. Peter's Basilica, to design and supervise an elaborate structure. Paying for the building instantly became a burden to the small town, and Margaret had to moderate her wishes, although the construction of fortifications and the improvement of streets and the harbor continued. She lived in a modest house, reducing her court, which had been 150 people in earlier years, to only 56. Margaret's goal in life and governance was work, simplicity, and honesty. Her court of honors became a court of work. The closest advisor continued to be the economist Pietro Aldobrandini who had accompanied her to Namur and continued to assist her in relations with Ottavio and Rome. The court lived modestly, spending 15,000 ducats a year, a fraction of what it had required in earlier years. Margaret still had attendants, musicians,

[24] Ibid., 284.
[25] Lefevre, *"Madama," Marguerita d'Austria*, 286–292.

and all the other people required by an elegant household, but in small numbers and in an open, unpretentious environment.

Poor health, caused in large part by the same bouts with gout and liver disorders that had affected her father, began to limit her in 1585. Aware that her situation continued to worsen, Margaret began preparing her will, drafting a meticulously crafted list of bequests to hundreds of people. None of the sums were large, even to the families and people who had been close to her in the Netherlands and Italy. Every person in her service was noted and rewarded in accord with his or her function and place. Aldobrandini received the largest grant of money and the most beautiful jewels went to Don Juan's daughter Giovanna. Margaret finished the will in early January of 1586. It revealed her views and attitudes and described the court around her in minute detail. She made no other overtures to her family or to anyone in the Netherlands. Aldobrandini kept Ottavio and Alessandro Farnese informed of her condition. Ottavio dispatched a doctor to assist Margaret and sent Rannucio, although he journeyed to Ortuna at a leisurely pace and did not arrive until the day after her death. Thus as she lay on her deathbed only friends surrounded her. Like her father, Margaret suffered great pain with as much fortitude as she could muster. Her life, with all of its twists, turns, and unexpected developments, ended simply, 12 January 1586.[26]

[26] D'Onofrio, *Il Carteggio*, 183–194.

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